

## **Training our Youth**

Ephesians 6:4

George Crawford, August 11, 2019

It is an absolute pleasure for me to be here, again. Jeremy is correct, I was born in Calgary up here long enough for about a year and a half, and then moved back to California. So, I do carry (as best I understand) dual Canadian-American citizenship. It was a thrill and it continues to be a thrill to be able to proclaim the Word of God in the land in which I was born. But the greater thrill is being able to proclaim the Word of God and to be able to be with fellow believers.

I'm going to ask each of the members of the team from Grace Community Church, if you'd just quickly stand so that you can be recognized. So, please do that right now. We are here to serve, we are here to help you have your Vacation Bible School. We want to kick that off in our worship time this morning. (Please be seated.) It has been a passion of heart at Grace Community Church since the mid-1950s.

The year was 1956, a number of couples, young families in the San Fernando Valley wanted to persuade the pastoral leadership of the church where they were attending to, of all things, have a Sunday school. And they were not allowed to do so. So they decided, they got together, they talked among themselves and said our children will have a Sunday school, and the rest is history. Grace Community Church began in 1956, and one of the deepest passions of our heart is the education and training of the youth. Let's have a word of prayer and then we'll move into the Word of God.

Our Father in heaven, we ask that You would enable us to proclaim Your Word both today and throughout this week. We pray, Lord, that we would not be the issue, but Your Word would be communicated carefully, skillfully and accurately, and that it would go forth with the power that Your Word promises it will have. Guide us now in all we do, we love and trust You, amen.

Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" - Ephesians 6:4. In the time that we have available this morning, we want to do four things quickly. We want to look at the content, the language, the positioning of this particular verse. We want to consider three points derived from this verse, an error to avoid, a method to follow, a content to communicate; an error to avoid, a method to follow, and a content to communicate.

This verse follows and flows from Ephesians 5:18 where Paul writes, "Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." In a companion passage, Colossians chapter 3, it says, "Let the Word of God dwell in you richly". Let your minds be continually permeated and controlled by the Word of God. Those two are synonymous expressions. Then he goes on to indicate a number of relationships that will demonstrate the filling of the Spirit.

You have husband and wife, the role of a wife towards her husband, the role of a husband towards his wife. You have the role of children towards parents. You have the responsibility of Christian employers towards their workforce, and the responsibility of Christian employees to their employers, be they Christian or non-Christian.

But the key that we're focusing on today and that we want to take a long, hard look at, is this verse, Ephesians 6:4. It starts off by saying, "Fathers." Now this is not necessarily directed to men, male ancestors exclusively. The same word can be used for both males and females, mothers and fathers. I suspect there is good reason to think that as a practical matter, it certainly was this way in the culture that Paul wrote more of the offense may come from dads than from moms. Mom may tend to be a little bit more kind, a little bit more compassionate in keeping with the heart of the offspring. Dads, this may be focusing a little bit more on us than our wives, but it will not be us exclusively.

Fathers, both mothers and fathers, do not provoke, do not aggravate, do not incite your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. There are two present tense phrases set in contrast with each other. "Do not be provoking your children to anger," - that is phrased in the present tense. If it's happening, stop. In contrast, a present tense command is also given: "be bringing them up".

It begins with feeding, the original context of the word - feeding. You start off with an infant. Pretty much, you feed them, you change them, you put them back to sleep. As time progresses, you teach them how to walk, you teach them how to socialize with other people. We train them up. It is a process of overall raising, overall development.

We bring them up in the discipline, Greek word is *paideia*. It relates to the idea of a systemic training, an overall training course of action. And yes, it can and it will include reasonable, age appropriate, context-suited chastening. God chastens us, and dad, mom, if we don't chasten our children, the word indicates that we consign them to very difficult lives during this life. Yes, we will chasten them, but that chastening needs to be carefully weighed, carefully balanced within the overall context of this verse.

"In the instruction," *nouthasia*, literally "bringing to mind," bring them to think about certain things, certain content should be permeating their thought process as they grow and as they reach maturity.

And finally, probably what may be one of the most intriguing parts of this verse – "of the Lord". In the Greek, that phrase can indicate two things. Anytime you see the word "of the Lord," it will possibly indicate source - where this is coming from, and content - what this is about. Some of my colleagues in ministry think that every time you see a phrase, there has to be one single accurate meaning. I am enough of a lawyer by background and by trade and I know that Paul was as well to know that sometimes one phrase can have two meanings. If they are both Biblically supported, if they are both accurate, you teach them both. When we see here "in the training, in the nurture, the admonition of the Lord," we use the manner prescribed by God, given by God, illustrated by God in His word. And we teach the content, the content that is revealed by God in His Word. And that is precisely what we want to keep in mind today.

Alright, so we look originally at the Greek background, slightly. We may want to spend more time this week discussing some of the fine tuning points of that. But we look at the Greek and the English translation of that. And the English translation is very accurate. We really don't have much of a problem with what we see here. And then we move on to a preliminary error to avoid.

I spent most of my early years playing the American sport of football. I also played to some degree, the sport of rugby that is found in the British Isles as well as the rest of the former British Empire. And one of the things that a solid football coach will always do is to work at the elimination of mistakes. You train your team well to avoid being off sides, you train your team well to avoid penalties. Eliminate mistakes and you've accomplished at least 50 to 65% of what is necessary to win and to win consistently, and as a champion. The same thing is true here in this particular passage.

Paul tells us that we are to avoid, we are not to keep provoking our children to anger. And when I first was going through this, I tended to think (and perhaps, this may well be in your own mind) that this is maybe a temporary tantrum that you don't want to be provoking your kids too; a temporary fit that sometimes children are prone to throw. That is not what Paul is talking about here. He uses a term that relates to and will indicate a prolonged, deep, intensive, settled state of anger. It is an anger capable of explosion.

This, I think when we look at what has been happening in the States, this may well explain and help account for some of the mass shootings that we have been seeing. Rather than looking at gun control, rather than looking at measures to require purchasers to be screened, we need to look back at what has taken place in the homes in which we have grown up in. There has been too often a deep intense anger that can explode instilled in us by the parenting in which we grew up, and perish the thought that we may be passing it on to some of our children. And we are called to avoid that. This is one of the reasons that some of you may have had problems making a commitment and living out a commitment to marriage. If you were provoked as a child to this kind of deep, settled, underlying anger, it may not have gone away all that quickly, all that easily. So, we want to be sure that we deal with and we understand this.

Now, how do we create this? How do we exasperate our children? Scripture doesn't really indicate a complete total number of ways. I'm going to give you quickly, 18. I'm going to give you 18 that are a combination of my pastor, Dr. McArthur, as well as those that I came up with on my own. And in fact, some of my team members also helped contribute to that. So, get a pencil, however you take notes, you may want to just copy these down. We'll quickly go through them. And then we'll move on to the remainder of the discussion that we have this morning.

What are some of the ways - hypocrisy. Mom and dad, if you are not genuine, you can count on exasperating, provoking your children to wrath.

Unnecessary "no's". Moms, dads, we have to say "no" to our kids at times. Just part of being a parent. You don't put your hand near a hot stove. We say "no," but make sure that the "no's" that we say, the "no's" that we require of our kids are really necessary, no more than is necessary.

No ego-driven discipline. This is beginning to be a little painful for me, probably for all of us. Ego-driven discipline will be a form of exasperation of your children that will be very difficult to recover from. They'll see through it.

Discipline in uncontrolled and ungodly anger. Discipline (and you need to make sure that it's qualified) in uncontrolled and ungodly anger - not all anger and discipline is wrong. If your children lies to you as to what had happened when he got into a car accident, and he told you

he was already at school, that's not an ungodly anger. And yet when that occurs, you need to be Spirit-controlled in how you react to that, how you discipline that in the child. So again, an uncontrolled ungodly anger will exasperate. A proper anger, properly Spirit-controlled will not exasperate and will in fact, call to repentance.

Ignoring or not considering the child's interests or feelings. You don't care. You don't take the time to think through or think about what the child is considering, what the child feels like.

Discipline out of a desire for social status or status within the church. You're aspiring to a position within the church, a position within the community, and you'd better not let your kids act out of line. We all understand that. Yes, but the primary motive of your discipline is not your achievement or your desire for status within the community or status within the church.

Never being willing to apologize and ask for forgiveness. Dads, moms, if you have sinned, if you have erred in the discipline that you have carried out on your children, be honest enough to admit it. If you stand on that, if you never apologize, if you never are willing to ask for forgiveness, you are going to create children that will at rock bottom have a pervading pervasive anger towards you.

Dr. MacArthur gives us eight other reasons. You can find them in his commentary on the book of Ephesians. I'll quickly go through them. And he notes that it is usually unintentional for these to occur.

Over protection. We want to protect our kids, we should. But we can do it too much.

Favouritism and comparison. Isaac favoured Esau and Rebecca favoured Jacob and created a seed of conflict between the two of them, and to some degree, lingers even to this particular day.

Pushing achievement beyond reasonable bounds. Expecting A grades out of a student that God may have gifted and equipped in nonacademic areas, and does well or will do well to bring home Bs and Cs on their report card.

Honour the children as God has created them, train them in the manner in which He has designed them - Proverbs tells us. And when they are old, they will not depart.

Continual discouragement. There have been some football coaches that I know of who never would say anything great or positive about a ball player. A guy could make a run for 95 yards and a touchdown, and the coach would look at him on the side and say, "That wasn't terrible" - continual discouragement.

Parents failing to make their children welcome or failing to make sacrifices on their behalf. Kids will see through that. The kids will know that mom and dad are what counts to mom and dad. And that's all that counts to them. There are times in which the parent must be willing to make a sacrifice of time and a sacrifice of money. When your children are young, dads, do not be out of the house too much in the evening. Be involved in church, be involved in the ministries that the Lord gives you. But your primary ministry is in your home. Your primary ministry is loving your wife genuinely, visibly, and then spending time with your children.

Don't ever think that quantity can substitute for quality. That's been a big buzz over the last 20, 30 years in western culture as moms have tended to want to gravitate towards the workforce. "Yeah, we'll make up for the lack of time at home by quality of time." It doesn't work. There is no substitute for quality of time in the way that God calls us to train up our children.

Failing to let them grow at a normal pace.

Giving love as a tool of reward or withholding it as a punishment. Once again, children will see through that and they will know that it is not really love if it is being given as a reward. It is not really love if it is withheld as a punishment. It is a bribing tool, nothing more and nothing less.

Finally, physical or verbal abuse. My paternal grandfather was a wife abuser, a wife beater. He is also was a man who did not hesitate to carry out unprovoked violence upon his children. That will exasperate children.

But it also prompts us to remember, and there may be in a group this size, some of you who realize, if you look back at the circumstances of your upbringing, you may have had this provocation yourself. If you look back at your parenting, you may feel that yeah, to some degree, I did that to my children.

God's grace, as we were singing about this morning, is more than adequate, more than sufficient to atone for and to correct where there has been that deep settled rage, either experienced or instilled in our children. The normal course of the cycle of domestic violence would have been for my father to pass that on in his training up of my brother, my sister and myself. He did not. God's grace will allow us to break that cycle, will allow us to discontinue a lifestyle that has been scarred or marred by the instillation of that ongoing deep settled rage in the exasperation of children.

This may well be one of the most significant passages for our culture at this particular time in all of the New Testament. But we don't stop there. Let's move on to the contemplation of things that are a little bit more enjoyable.

The manner of training given by the Lord. What is the manner of training of the youth that is given to us by our Lord? I'm going to give you a list of ten points. This is by no means an exhaustive list. You may want to come up to me immediately after the sermon and say, "Have you considered...have you thought about that?" And maybe if you have something that I haven't thought about, I'll add it to my notes for the next time, if ever God gives me the chance to speak on this particular topic. But let's just talk about this, and keeping with the passage that the text says that, we are diligently, we are on a present tense, ongoing basis to be training up our children. This is an ongoing battle that will begin. It will begin prior to birth. If God has given you the opportunity to be carrying a child, be reciting His Word to that child in utero. Be singing His hymns to that child in utero. The Scriptural pattern was that at eight days, the child was to be presented to and dedicated to the Lord. Early on, be exposing that child to the teaching of the Word of God, to the things of the Lord. Understand that you're in it for the long haul.

Unless you are unlike any set of parents that has ever lived, you will lose some battles. There will be times in the course of your parenting that you'll walk away and you'll not have done

what you should have - you realize that. Or you may have done what you should have and the kids still soft that to go ahead and do what they wanted in violation of your instructions. You lose a battle, but you are going to win the war. You are not going to be content with anything other than an overall eventual victory in the life of your child. Your passion is for diligent teaching over the course of time.

Secondly, use visual reminders. In the Hebrew culture, men would put on the doorposts of their homes, reminders that they were in fact, part of the people of God. The phylacteries would be worn on their foreheads, so they would never lose sight of that. In our family, my beautiful wife made sure that throughout the house we had plaques that carried one of our favourite verses for our family - Joshua 24:15, "As for me in my house, we will serve the Lord." We want that to be present and reminding us, reminding our children as we raised them up.

Children's Bible story books. Train them up being exposed to the truth of Scripture early on.

Take them to see natural wonders, take them to see the ocean. And when you do so, remember that anytime you read a reference to the ocean in Scripture, it always carries with it an underlying connotation of the sovereignty of God. Take them to see the ocean. Take them up to Banff, some of the beautiful cliffs and lakes that are up there. Take them down to the states to see the Grand Canyon, to see Yosemite. The Scripture makes clear that there is a Gospel presented in creation that leaves men without excuse. Take them to see the things of God so that they are visually aware what God has done.

Training up children should go across generational lines, and it should be as an overwhelming priority. We live in the wake of the fall. We live in the wake of one of the most important events that have occurred in the history of man. And as a result of that, what we experience, what we live is not what God intended. It is not what occurred immediately after the time of creation. In the 1,200 years after the flood, the longevity of men dropped about 92% going to the range that it has today, roughly 70 years with a maximum of 120. You may on occasion hear of people that live into 110, 112. But it's very rare. Most of the time, the average longevity is going to be between 70 and 80. We experience futility in nature. Things break down. Parents, we need to be communicating to our children that that's not the way that God intended it. We make sure that our kids understand that God has in mind something better for us.

In recent years, there has been a tendency to develop what we would refer to as a bucket list. "Before I die, I want to go here, I want to see this, I want to do that, I want to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa. I'd like to sky dive," whatever it would be. And there is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with that. And I'm speaking as a grandfather to grandfathers, I'm speaking as a dad to dads. Our bucket list has to have as its primary overriding feature, the training in godliness of the next generation. That is at the top of our bucket list. So, I'm 71, 17 through 18, Lord, help me to survive. Help me to hang in there long enough to communicate who You are, communicate Your Word to the next generation. Psalm 145:5-7 (write this down and check it later), "One generation shall praise you to the next generation."

Training up children in God's manner also involves training them up in a manner that understands the bounds of the paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. What am I talking about here? Both divine sovereignty and the salvation of men and the lives of

men was taught by Scripture as is human responsibility. Human responsibility for what we do, we react to that, we call our children to repentance. We communicate to them the Word of God. We communicate to them passionately the importance of turning to Christ in repentance, turning from sin and turning to Christ in saving faith, trusting in Him and Him alone for salvation. As parents, we do so also knowing that the Scripture is clear that no man can come to the Son unless the Father draws him. We know that the Scripture says God has a sanctifying claim on the children in any home where there is at least one Christian parent. This is First Corinthians chapter 7. We know that. And we also do it in the confident knowledge, the confident hope that those who come to Christ will not be rejected. Jesus said, "He who comes to Me, I will not cast out." So, we train our children, understanding and living out the paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

We act in a manner that is completely honest and without pretense, without selfish ambition or without cunning. Again, as I indicated previously, the failure to do that will be the most certain way of exasperating your children, provoking them to wrath. First Thessalonians 2:3-4 (and you can write this down, check later on this), Paul writes that, "When we were with you, we acted as a loving mother, we acted as a father." In both cases, with parental love. Prior to that, he also points out that we did not act in any way with any kind of guile, deception or dishonesty.

Training children in the way of the Lord involves training to maturity. Ephesians 4:14-16, tells us that we are to be working within the context of the church, training up our children so that they will not be tossed around by the winds of false doctrine. The idea is that of a ship that has blown backwards and forwards tossed up and down by the waves and the stormy pestilent sea. The idea here is that we are to train our children to be discerning. Hebrews 5:12 tells us that discernment is for those who are mature, who by practice have been trained to discern and distinguish between that which is good and that which is evil.

In our culture, there is increasingly a need to be training for discernment in the area of gender identity. It is much the case much more so than I would have ever dreamed when I started serving as an elder in 1996. But today, one of the biggest challenges that we face is dealing with and training our children in a culture that is questioning every aspect of their sexuality, their sexual identity. We need to be training them to be discerning, to be in response to the Scripture despite that that has taken place.

Colossians 1:28, Paul writes that we train to the point of being able to present every man complete in Christ, mature in Christ. Parents, that's our goal for the training up of our children. We train them to the point of being mature, to the point of being complete in Christ.

Now, how's that to be done? First thing, be careful to make sure that you are acting in coordinated partnership with the church. There has to be a coordinated partnership between the family and the church. The Scripture indicates that God gives gifts. He has given this church elders, he has given this church a pastor teacher for the purpose of training up the saints in the work of ministry. Much as we exhaust the family, much as the family is important, the promise of the protection goes to the church and there has to be a coordinated partnership between the church and the family.

Why is that important? There is at times a movement within the church (I won't mention its name, but many of you may have already encountered it) that teaches that dads we can do it all. We have little mini churches (that's not accurate) within our family. And there is a

tendency to pull those children away from the overall ministry, the overall partnership between the family and the church that should be in place. Dads, don't try to do it all by yourself. That's why we have the church, we come together. That's why we are having this week a Vacation Bible School precisely for that particular purpose.

Special days of concentrated training. Sabbaths, the Lord's Day. There is a mindset that we see in the States. For one, of a better word, I'll call it the "club sport" mentality. Not content with just having children in normal soccer or normal baseball, normal whatever, hockey leagues. Clubs have developed upward that try to prepare the kids to qualify for college athletic scholarships. My son who ministers to youth in the Midwest is telling me that they're even seeing that in the environment of musicians working in high school bands that are trying to get a scholarship perhaps to go to a higher educational institution. And they do so at the expense of involvement in worship. I'm not saying, I'm not going to go to the point of saying that you do nothing on Sunday other than to go to church. That goes to a point that the Scripture will not support. However, Sunday, the New Testament indicates is the Lord's Day. It is built upon a Biblical backdrop in the Old Testament. The Sabbath was the day of the Lord. There needs to be a regular set apart of time in the course of your week in which you're going to focus on the things of God and on the training of God, and on the fellowship with the people of God. Looking back in my own family, that probably was one of the things that was most instrumental in our kids reaching a point where they are today, where they're both serving the Lord in ministry. You could be out late on Saturday night, that's fine. You were going to be in church on Sunday morning and you'd better know what the preacher was talking about. Sunday was the day of the Lord. At least one service in the course of that day you needed to be in church. Obviously, we would not rule out the possibility of illness. We had those problems as much as anybody else. But as a general rule of thumb, there needs to be that commitment to a regular day of worship and training within the word of the Lord.

Add to that, there needs to be celebrations, periodic celebrations. We have thanksgiving, we have other times in the course of the year, Christmas, where we celebrate the work of God. When God has blessed your family, dads, moms, have an impromptu time of a thanksgiving dinner. Go out, enjoy, just be together and ponder the blessings of the Lord.

That is by the way, precisely what we are wanting to do this week. It is going to be a specialized time of celebration, a specialized time of training. One of the biggest focuses that we have for this week is that it will be fun. Dr. McArthur has used the phrase, "There needs to be a sanctified joy in our time together." If our kids look at us at the end of the week and say, "That was boring, that was totally bad," we'll have failed. There needs to be a certain amount of fun. And this should not surprise us. First question of the Westminster Catechism, "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Puritans understood that those were two sides of the same coin. We glorify God by enjoying Him. And as we enjoy Him, we glorify Him. So yeah, our time this week is going to have a primary focus on fun.

Let me retract that, let me clarify that as we move on to the content that we are to preach. The content that we are to preach is to exalt Christ. The content of the Lord, we are calling our children to know and to understand Christ. I've had the privilege of getting Dr. MacArthur to autograph some of the books that he has written. He invariably will follow his signature by writing down Second Corinthians 4:5-6. As you look that up, you'll see that what he is saying is, "I'm not the one at issue. We proclaim Christ and not ourselves." And that is what we're wanting to do this week. We preach Christ, we proclaim Him who is truly and fully God, and



who is truly and fully Man. We proclaim His perfect life that God will attribute to those who trust in Christ. We proclaim His atoning death in which He paid in principle for all and in actuality for the elect. (We're not going to go into the issue of limited atonement right now.) The penalty for sin, all sin everywhere, we proclaim His bodily resurrection. When we celebrate Easter, it is the single most important event that any of us will ever commemorate.

The resurrection of Christ is probably the most established fact in all of ancient history. Acts 1:3 refers to the many irrefutable proofs of His resurrection that existed. In legal parlance, it's the smoking gun. The convincing, the overriding, the compelling evidence that He was who He said He is. He was declared with power to be the Son of God. By His resurrection, Romans 1 tells us, it confirms the veracity of Scripture. It makes sense out of the suffering that sometimes we have to go through, and it provides convincing, final, overwhelming evidence of the resurrection hope that we aspire to.

This week (and I'm going to give you an outline of what we're going to be covering), we're breaking it down into four days. And I made sure that I got these from Jeremy Peters. One day we will look at Christ as creator and sustainer of all of that is. He is the one who created. John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16-17, and Hebrews 1:3 tells us that He is the one that sustains. But for the presence of Christ, the physical world, that in which we live would disintegrate totally. He is the one who holds it together. First day, Christ as creator, Christ as sustainer.

Second day, Christ as sovereign miracle worker. We'll look at the healing of the paralytic, the man who was lowered (this would have been fun to see) through a roof down to where Christ was. Very likely, it could have been in the home of Peter. We don't know for sure, but I would be willing to suspect that that would be the case.

Day number three, Christ as the resurrected atonement. "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might in Him be made the righteousness of God." First Corinthians 15:3-8 tells us in brief overview, the evidence in support of the resurrection. Again, the most established fact in all of history, the most important fact in all of history.

Thursday, we'll be focusing on Christ as coming king. He is the one who will soon appear. There will be a shout. Somebody speculated that the content of that shout is going to be "Enough!" There has been enough sin, there has been enough suffering, the results of that sin. There has been enough persecution of God. He's going to come and He's going to set things right. There, we believe, will be a millennial kingdom of a thousand years. And then the final, new heaven and new earth. But it will happen. We have absolute total confidence in that being the case and with good reason.

Now, at this point, I want to say something very quickly. To those of you who we'll be working together over the course of the next four days, we're going to have some bumps in the road. We may have some communication that we have to work through. "I thought you said were doing this. No, I thought you were doing that." There's going to be some fatigue. We're probably not going to get as much sleep as we want. We're going to be going on adrenaline to some degree. And to some degree, we're going to find ourselves being about to wear out. Addressing that, I want to mention a story to you that occurred somewhere in the mid-1870s. A young man who would eventually go on to become a very faithful missionary to Africa, a man by the name of Frederick Arnot. As a teenager, most likely, he had admired and to some degree, been discipled at least by example, by a man by the name of David Livingston. Frederick Arnot and a friend of his decided that they would go down into that

part of Glasgow, Scotland that was most inhabited by bars, by taverns, by saloons. And they would go down there and try to conduct a worship service. So they did, and the predictable thing would occur. People were laughing at them, they were taunting them, they would tolerate their singing because it was somewhat amusing. But then when they tried to preach, people would throw things at them. They would hurl abuse at them and give them a great deal of grief. Well, they were about ready to leave. They packed up, they were starting to go, and then what appeared to be - and I use the word "appeared to be" because in this location, it would have been very unlikely for someone who was truly a man, just a man to be there. What appeared to be a tall elderly man, grabbed Frederick Arnot by the shoulders and turned around, turned the man around and looked him in the eye. And he said, "Keep at it laddie, God loves to hear men say great things about His Son." So, when you feel that fatigue set in, when you feel that sense of, "Oh, come on, we have two more days to go?" Keep at it laddie, God loves to hear men say great things about His Son. Keep at it moms and dads, God loves to hear men say great things about His Son.

As we've been going through this (wrapping this up), if you're like me, you feel inadequate, and you should. We are inadequate. Each and every one of us is marred by the Fall. Each and every one of us has been marred by the imperfections in our own upbringing. Each and every one of us to some degree, is unworthy of the privilege and the opportunity that God has placed upon us. That's a given. We can handle that because the Scripture tells us our adequacy in this task is from God. Paul writes, and this is in Second Corinthians 3:5-6, he says, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything, anything ..." (the least amount of good deeds, the least amount of good effort) "... We are not adequate in ourselves to consider anything as from ourselves, but our adequacy, our adequacy is from God. Our adequacy is from God who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Our adequacy is in Christ, our adequacy is in the power that He provides to us through His Spirit.

Lord, we thank you for the ministry of Your Word at this point. We now turn the rest of the service over. Father, I believe we have on the agenda that we're going to be coming before Your table even now. Thank you for what You've taught us and what You're going to work in us, amen.