

The Top 10 For Life Series #6
“Cmdt 5: The Right Attitudes”

For some of you it might be good just to come sing before you start all of this service business. This week, with Thanksgiving coming up, it might just be an encouragement and I hope that you will come and be a part of tonight. We are going to have a wonderful service tonight at 6:00 p.m. I have a special message that I want to bring tonight on the most important ingredient in your Thanksgiving feast so I hope you will be here tonight. Then just let me remind you, it is announced there in the worship guide today, but this week, rather than having our standard Wednesday evening gathering we are moving the Wednesday to Tuesday. Therefore, on Tuesday evening we will be coming here, we will have a wonderful family dinner, which is a highlight in the midweek every week, and then coming here across the street into this building for a concert with Cynthia Clawson and I want to urge you to make plans to come to dinner, to bring family members if you have them in visiting with you, or friends, and to plan to come and to be here on Tuesday night. Invite some of the friends that are around you. I promise you that this will not be a disappointment. Cynthia is a very accomplished musician who has beautiful music of praise to the Lord and it will just be a wonderful way to put God's song in your heart before we begin the Thanksgiving feasting and the Thanksgiving time this week.

Now over the next few weeks, beginning with Thanksgiving and then going all the way through the Christmas time, no doubt about it, most of us will be spending more time with our extended family than possibly any other time of the year and for some of us that is a very thrilling and a very exciting thing, to think we are going to finally sit face-to-face again with parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews. For some of us that is the most thrilling, the most delightful thing to anticipate this week, that we are going to get together with our families. But now I have to be honest and say that for others of us that is a very stressful thought. I mean we love our family but, you know, just a little dab will do you and so sometimes there is this sense that getting together can be a very stressful and a very difficult thing and the holidays have a way of bringing the expectations and all of the schedule and all of the gatherings together and sometimes it is hard to know whether to look forward to it or whether you will just be

glad when it is done. It is like someone who said the most beautiful lights of Christmas are the taillights of the relatives as they leave and go back wherever they are going. I don't know how it is for you and for your family but what I know is that family is so much a part of what makes the tradition of Thanksgiving and of Christmas so significant. Frankly, family is very important. I think we all know we are living in a day in which it is very difficult and very challenging to build and maintain strong family relationships. But when you take God's Word, the Bible, and you open it to the book of Genesis you immediately find in the Garden of Eden a discussion about the family. If you were to fast-forward through all of the pages of scripture and all of the chapters of the Bible, you would find that time and time again so much of the significance of the work of God had to do with what He was doing in families. You come even to the book of Revelation and in the final gathering in Heaven and there is a sense of gathering around the table of the family of God. So for God and for things of the Spirit it is all in the family and family is essential, family is important to every one of us. Why? Because our family is the taproot of life and family is essential to the health, and the wholeness, and the well being of our life. Thus, it comes as no surprise that when we begin to read God's Top 10 list, found in the 20th chapter of the book of Exodus, that right at the middle of the list we find this matter of family and family relationships and what our attitude is with regard to the family. So much of the altitude of life is dependent upon the attitude of life and your ability in life and my ability in life. To determine a sense of goodness and well being is dependent upon the attitudes that we have relative to all of our relationships but, most importantly, the relationship of our family. Therefore, I want you to be turning to Exodus Chapter 20 in your Bible this morning and we will begin reading in just a moment at the 12th verse. Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12.

Now this is God's Top 10 list. These are the ten things that are the most essential for fullness, completion, and wholeness in life.

We had said that from the very beginning of this series that these are not rules, they are just right. They are the things you need to know and to understand. Now if you have never really seen it this way before, I want you to know that there is an order and there is

a structure to the ten things in this list. If you will look very carefully, you will find that the first four of the items on the list, the first four of God's commandments, all specifically relate to our relationship with God. They are God's Word in their focus and in their function. They tell us how we are to have a right relationship with God our heavenly Father. But once we finish talking about the essentials of the right relationship with God, the immediate point of intersection, the fifth verse, begins to discuss our relationship with others. In particular, the crossroads, the crosshair, if you will, of the reality of faith in our life begins with our family. But the order of the commandments is that four of them relate to a right relationship with God and six of them have to do with our right relationship with others and with things in life. So here we come to the crossover point. Here we come to the first place that faith and authenticity with God takes on a reality in life and it is in the area of our family. So what does the scripture say in Exodus chapter 20 verse 12? Let's read this verse out loud together. "Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." Honor your father and your mother. If you love God, and if you honor God, then you are going to honor and love the home and the family, which He has established. Honor is important in the family. Yet I have to be honest and say, and we have to be honest and agree, that frankly, when we think about the condition of families in our world today I think the first thought is more often that of dishonor than of honor because so many families are injured and divided. So many families have known the tragedy of breakup and the injury of rejection and rebellion. Rather than a spirit of honor it seems that the hallmark of a home is a spirit of defiance, sort of a sense of "I can't wait until I get out of here." Yet wholeness in life, fullness in life, is in direct proportion to a right relationship with our families.

Now, I want to say at the outset that there are many things that I believe are included and that is intended in this statement of fact and in the statement of command that God provides for us today beginning with the first word. What is that first word? Say it with me. Honor. Honor. When it comes to the family, if we are going to apply, and if we are going to understand the significance of this statement, we must recover the principle of honor. We must recover the principle of honor and that is the first thing that I want us to

look at and the first thing that I want us to think about today. It is that of recovering the principle of honor. Because if there is one word that is sort of an umbrella word that describes what God wants to be the attitude and the atmosphere of the family, it is the word, honor. God wants us to live in the home and live in relationship with our families in a context of honor, honoring those with whom we share relationship.

Now what does that word, honor, mean? What does it mean? Well, certainly for a child, the word honor can mean to obey, to obey, possibly to respect. It could mean to give attention to. It could mean to ascribe value. Honor could be expressed in any of these different ways – respect, attentiveness, obedience, and value. God wants us to live our family lives in such a way that there is a mixture within the context of the family of an attitude of mutual respect, of mutual sense of value, and worth, and of course, a spirit of submission and a spirit of obedience. Now I know immediately when I talk about honor and value in the family that some are immediately thinking, “Yes but pastor, you don’t know my family, you don’t know how dishonorable, and how disrespectful my parents are. You don’t know what I have grown up with and what I have grown up around” and you say to me this morning, “Pastor, are you saying that I ought to just read this commandment and then I ought to just grin and bear it and just go on?” No, I have a lot more to say about that in just a few minutes but I want you to know that when it comes to the family and when it comes from your relationship with God to the first point of personal relationship, the point of the family, that God wants you and God wants me to have a sense of honor and of value and of respect and wholeness about our view of the family. Why? Why does God want us to have that? Because the family, the home, is divine in its origin. It is divine in its origin. Families are not the progressive result of the development of culture. The whole idea of home and family life isn't something that man thought up, it is not something that came along in the evolutionary curve, it is specifically, and it is strategically, something that the Bible defines as being the creative act of God. God established the first family. God ordered the first home. Consequently, when we talk about home and family, our relationship with God and our relationship with others, there should be a sense of honor for the concept of the family because it is divine in its origin. Not only is it divine in its origin, it is divine in its order. God has put

together a team, a father and a mother, a husband and a wife, and children. And to everything that God has created, in every institution that God has established, He has given it a specific order.

God has established three institutions in the world. He established the institution of the home and of the family. He established the institution of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and He established the institution of government. In every one of those things that God has established, He has developed an order. He has developed a process whereby decisions are to be made and roles are to be fulfilled and responsibilities are to be accepted. All of that is a part of the divine order of the home and so God wants us to respect the home. God wants us to see its divine origin and God wants us to honor its divine order, and your parents are worthy of honor not because of what they are but because of where they are in the home, as father and of mother.

Then there is something else we need to see. Not only that we should honor the home and the family because it is divine in origin and divine in order, but because it is divine in organization and therefore in function. God has so organized the home and so developed the home that all of society is built and all of society is developed and extended from the home. So the home, therefore, is the foundational block of all society, of all culture, and of all history. I like what Chuck Colson said about the family when he said the family is the most basic unit of government, it is the first community to which a person is attached and the first authority under which a person learns to live. The family establishes society's most basic values. As go the homes, so goes the community, so goes a nation, so goes history, so goes destiny.

I like what Dr. Billy Graham said about the home. He said, "apart from religious influence, the family is the most important unit of society." It would be well if every home were Christian but we know that is not so. The family in the home can never exert their proper influence while ignoring biblical standards. The Bible calls for discipline and recognition of authority. If children do not learn this at home, they will go out into society without the proper attitude toward authority and law. There is always the

exceptional child but the average tells us that the child is largely with the home has made him or her. The only way to provide the right home for your children is to put the Lord above them and fully instruct them in the ways of the Lord. You. You are responsible before God for your home and for the way in which you provide for them. And so the Bible underscores this principle of honor. Great leaders have echoed this concept of honor and, most importantly, you and I today need to recover the concept of honor because whether your parents are good or whether your parents are bad, really that doesn't matter. The honor that comes to the family must begin with an honor of the authority of God and with the establishment of the home. For us to have healthy homes it has to begin in the attitude, the attitude called honor. Do you have a spirit of honor when you think of the family? Do you have a sense of honor when you think of your parents? Do you as a young person honor the parents that God has given to you? There is not a more important principle in life than that of honor. So let us recover the principle of honor.

Not only does this commandment challenge us to recover the principle of honor but, I believe, there is something else that is inclusive in this commandment and that is it says, "Honor your father and your mother." Now, I want you to know that while I believe that certainly father and mother could be referred to as biological terms because every one of us is a product of a father and a mother. Yet, I do not believe that that was the intent. I believe that when the Bible speaks of father and mother it is speaking of the roles they play in a person's life and it is the honor that God gives, the blessing that God gives, when he brings children into a home and a family. Therefore, the Bible is telling us that the role of father and the role of mother is an important role.

This morning I think we not only need to recapture the principle of honor but we need to focus for a few minutes on restoring the character of parents. A lot of what is wrong in our homes today is not with the kids, it is with mom and dad. There are some character flaws in families that are being evident in the lives of parents who are not fulfilling the calling that God has put upon their life.

I am sure everyone in this building at one time or another has been to a flea market. Many times when you go to flea markets you find those places where they have all the used furniture. Sometimes you come across an old piece of furniture where the color of the furniture has faded, it is scratched, and it is worn. However, if you take it to someone who knows how to do furniture refinishing, they can take that piece of furniture, they can take it home, they can sand it, they can strip it, they can stain it again and, you know, it is amazing to see the quality and the character of that wood when it is resurfaced and when the real character comes back out, when the use and abuse is gone. I believe that in many ways, this morning God is calling parents in this building, and grandparents in this building, to look again at us and to say, "What is the condition of my character?" Am I being the kind of leader, am I being the kind of example that my children can follow? Am I fulfilling the relational and the responsible role that God has for me as a parent? The character of parents is important.

Why is parenting so essential? Why is it so important that we see this whole idea of family first through the eyes of parents before we even talk about honoring father and mother from the eyes of children? Because parents perform three very important functions in life. Parents are a skylight to heaven. You know what it is like in a dark room to have a hole cut up above and that light to come in. It is amazing what skylights can do to dark rooms! In this dark world in which live God's plan and God's purpose for parents is that you and I are to be skylights whereby our children see us and they begin to get a right concept of what God the heavenly Father is like. Let's face it! How do you teach a teenage boy or a teenage girl about a faithful heavenly Father when all they have known is an unfaithful father? How do you teach a teenage boy or teenage girl the purity of the love of God when they have been used and abused and the matter of love has been discarded for lust in their home and somehow a dirty sin has been covered in their family?

Well, I want you to know that the Bible says that the strictest of judgement has been reserved for those who perpetrate iniquity and injury and abuse upon children. Jesus said it would be better for that person to have not been born or to have been born and to have

a millstone hung around his neck than for him to abuse a child. I want you to know mom, I want you to know dad, that one of the most important functions that you have is that you are to be a skylight to heaven. While, certainly, you are not perfect and I am not perfect today, we are to take seriously the matter of our relationship with God so that what kids see in our home is that they see things that help them to have a good concept of what God is like. Not only are parents, and the role of parents, important because they are to be a skylight to heaven, but because parents provide a window on the world. Really, everything we know and see about life we see it through the eyes of our parents. Our parents interpret life for us and if you are a parent, one of the most crucial things that you are doing day in and day out is that you are interpreting life for your children. You are telling them what matters and what doesn't. You are teaching them values. You may be instilling in them prejudices. You see, all of these things many times come as a reflection of what is happening in the family. So, as a parent, when we examine ourselves and when we consider this matter of honoring father and mother we have to step back and say, "Is the window I am providing on the world of my child's life one that is reflecting the things that matter to God?" You see, a parent's role is important because they are a skylight to heaven and because they are a window to the world.

There is something else about a parent that is important. That is, not only do you provide a skylight to heaven and a window to the world but you, more than anyone else, provide a mirror for that child's life. What a child sees, what a child knows about esteem, about affirmation, about significance, and security is in many ways that which is reflected from a parent. I would venture to say there are some of you sitting in this building this morning for whom one of the greatest challenges of your life is that you push, you press, and you have an obsessive-compulsive sense about yourself in performance because no one has ever told you that you are valuable and you are loved just as you are. A parent never reflected that love and you thought that love was based on performance and you spent your whole life, some of you, on up into the senior years of life and to this day you are still trying to perform for a parent who never blessed you and never affirmed and never gave you value and love.

You see, ladies and gentleman, it is such an important thing when we are in that role of father or mother and we bring to the forefront a shine on the surface of character in our life that will reflect back to those children an image of their importance, of their worth, of their value. Because, to be a father, to be a mother, is to provide a mirror to the lives of children and to provide an appraisal and an approval of life that is important. I want to ask you, if you are a parent this morning, are you right with God today? Has there been a point in your life where you have attended those first four areas of honoring God and letting Him be first place in your life and having spiritual affections and appetites and spiritual priorities in your life? You see, all of them come together right here. There is a word here today, a word of challenge and a word of encouragement for us to restore character in parents. I want you to know if there were ever to be any hope for renewal in this country or in our world, it must begin in the home and in the family and it must begin with parents who are committed to being a reflection, a living reflection, of Jesus Christ.

There is something else I think we need to see this morning. That is not only that we need to recapture the principle of honor and that we need to again look at this matter of the character of parents but, obviously, we need to respond with steps of action because this is a commandment that has the assumed response of some level of action. Honor your father and your mother. So there is a step of action to be taken. I want to specifically speak about what it means for us to honor our father and our mother, what it means to show that honor in families. We have some boys and girls today and this could be a message that God uses in your life to help you in your home. We have some teenagers and students. We have some parents. Maybe you are wondering what do I need to pray to teach my children to honor me. Let me just give them the list and you listen along and see if maybe you can't help to reinforce these things in your home. How do you honor your father and your mother? What does it look like when it is fleshed out in life? Let me suggest several things:

1. We honor our father and mother when we address them respectfully, when we speak to them respectfully using appropriate words and appropriate responses when they ask us a question, not just saying "yeah" and "huh" but showing honor to them. I can

assure you that if today you were pulled over by an officer of the law, given a ticket on the way home, and asked to appear in court in the next few weeks, that when you walk into that court room you would find there is someone who is seated behind a bench with a black robe. When you walk into that courtroom and you get ready to address the person who is there I can assure you you don't go, "hey buddy!" There is an appropriate designation and what is it? It is "Your honor." Does that mean that the person who is sitting behind that bench is honorable? Not necessarily. To be honest with you, he may be a very dishonorable person personally but what they represent behind the bench in the robe is a position of honor and therefore when you address them you address them as "your honor." In the same way in the family, when there is honor for father and mother there is an effort, whether you agree or disagree, whether your parents are godly or ungodly, there is an effort to try to be able to speak to them respectfully and address them respectfully because of the role that they play in your life.

2. Not only do we address them respectfully but if we honor our parents with a specific step of action it is that we need to hear them courteously. We need to listen to what they have to say and we need to do it in a courteous fashion. I believe this continues even after you are grown. There comes a point in your life where there is a transfer from the father/mother relationship to the husband/wife relationship and the permanent relationship of life is that of marriage and not that of parenting. But, I want you to know that even in these days in my life I still believe that I need to listen courteously to my father and mother. That doesn't mean I always agree with them. It doesn't mean that I always do exactly what they tell me to do but I tell you I honor them through hearing. It is important that if you are going to honor your father and mother that you learn to hear them courteously, that you understand they are interested in you and that they care about you. You need to give them a good hearing.
3. If you are to honor your father and your mother you must obey them joyfully. You know there are two ways to obey, one is to do it willingly and the other is to do it begrudgingly. In the book of Philippians Paul said, "Do all things without grumbling and complaining." I believe there is a challenge this morning to positively and

quickly and swiftly obey our parents and to trust God with that obedience though that obedience may not always seem to make sense to us and so we are to obey them joyfully.

4. There is another thing we need to do if we are to honor our father and our mother.

We are to address them respectfully, we are to hear them courteously, and we are to obey them joyfully. But, listen to this, we are to forgive them repeatedly. One of the greatest ways you can honor your parents is by forgiving them because you do not have perfect parents. I am surprised I did not get an “amen” on that! Of course some of you want lunch this afternoon and you know better! But you do not have perfect parents. Let me tell you something else, there is not a person in here that has ever had perfect parents. I am a parent and I am a pastor and I am not a perfect parent and I am not a perfect pastor. There is a problem that is inherent in every one of us that is the undermining of all of our relationships and it is the human problem of sin, it is the problem of the heart. In many ways the one book that still needs to be written on marriage and on family that has not been written is the book *I Am Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional*. We are all dysfunctional because we have sinful parents. Yet, amazingly, today it has become common to sit on somebody's couch and to blame your parents for all of your problems. Now don't get me wrong. I have talked about the issue of the character of parents and how character counts in parents' lives but I want you to know that many times one of the greatest steps of honor with your family is not to try to overlook the injury that comes in family relationships but it is to refuse to let that injury give way to a root of bitterness in your life. So many times what destroys us in life is that bitterness gets down into our hearts and it begins to take root in us and before we know it, we are not living for God, we are not living for good, we are just living to find some way to vent the anger and to get back at people who have hurt us in our lives. One of the greatest ways that you can honor and restore the principle of honor in your life, is that when you have been injured and when you have been rejected and when something terrible has happened in your family that rather than letting yourself internalize that in bitterness that you choose yet another principle, even higher than the principle of honor, and it is the principle of forgiveness and that you begin to let forgiveness work in your life. Does God want

you to honor the sins of your parents? Maybe your father or your mother is an alcoholic and has been unresponsive and irresponsible in life. Maybe your father or your mother have been unfaithful to the marriage covenant and the marriage commitment they made to your family. Maybe your parents have abused you. Maybe your parents have abandoned you and maybe there is a sense in your heart today as you heard me talking about honoring father and mother that there was almost a sense of hitting the delete button and saying, "this doesn't matter to me." But I want you to know that it does. Because, until you deal with the issue of your family and the condition of your family, you are never going to have freedom in your life. The greatest thing that can happen is for us to realize today that sometimes where our families are broken and our families have let us down and our families are imperfect, that one of the ways we can honor God and honor our parents is by choosing the path of forgiveness instead of the path of bitterness. There is only one way to be healed of abuse. There is only way to deal with rejection and abandonment and that is, apart from that person coming and being restored to you of their own initiative and of their own repentance, it is you being restored to God and forgiving them. Sometimes that is what needs to happen in our lives, because nothing, listen to me, nothing so affects the current condition of your relationships, of your home, of your family, of your marriage today as does the condition of the relationship with your primary family, your parents.

You remember how Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, how that he was rejected, he was abandoned, and his brothers abused him? They hated him and they despised him. Frankly, Joseph had every reason in the world to walk away from his family and to forget them. By the grace of God he managed to assume and he managed to ultimately to grow and enlarge his influence until he became the second most powerful man in all of Egypt and there came a day when, because of famine and because of destruction, that Joseph's own brothers, those who had done the worst to him, came and stood before him. On that day, had most of us been Joseph, we would have looked at them and said, "you need to squirm like a worm in hot ashes!" Do you know what Joseph did? He looked at his brothers, he looked at what God had

done in his life and he said, “you meant all of these things to me for evil but God meant them for good.” He used the worst moment of his life to become a defining moment of extending forgiveness and of extending honor to the most dishonorable people in his life. One of the great ways in your life to gain blessing and freedom is to come to the place where you let the grace of God do the best or maybe even your family has done the worst in you.

How do we honor our parents? We address them respectfully. We hear them courteously. We forgive them.

5. We thank them regularly. We thank them regularly. This week is one of the greatest opportunities that you can have and I can have to put our arms around members of our family and to say, “thank you.” You honor God and you honor your parents when you say thank you to them. Now for those of you who have a healthy relationship with your family that just needs to be a natural thing expressing your appreciation for all that your parents have done for you. It is amazing what our parents do for us and I don’t think it is until you have children yourself that you understand how much you really owe your parents for what they have done for you. Someone has said, “a father is the man who now carries pictures where he once carried money!” It is true! I heard of another family who was getting ready to get a Christmas picture done and as they were standing there the dad said, “why don’t you boys put your hands in each of my pockets, it will be more natural that way!” I am just telling you it costs a lot to raise kids. Kids, we need to just take time and all of us need to look at mom and dad and say, “thank you!” You may say, “well, I don’t have one thing to thank my parents for.” You know what? You may be right! But let me tell you what you can do. You can learn to appreciate God’s gift of life to you regardless of the vessel that God brought you through. Even if that vessel was a dishonoring vessel, you can stop and say, “Lord, thank you for my life and therefore, thank you mom and thank you dad.” You see, we can cultivate thanksgiving and it is a healthy thing in our families.
6. Another way in which we honor father and mother is by hugging them daily. Just taking time to put your arms around your parents and saying, “I love you!” You

know it is really amazing how far a parent can travel on just a little bit of that kind of affection. It doesn't take a whole lot. But there is nothing in the world that makes my day like when my son or when my daughter put their arms around me or hug me and express love and appreciation to me.

7. Then, if you are going to honor your parents, you must remember them faithfully. Remember them faithfully! Don't forget them. Remember their birthdays, remember their anniversaries, and remember the times that you shared in life and as their senior years come and the winter seasons of life come, keep remembering your parents. Do you remember when Jesus was hanging on the cross? What agony, what suffering He was physically enduring. One of the most precious moments from that Cross was when Jesus looked down and when He said, "Woman, behold your son." And then when He turned and when He mentioned to his half-brother, who was there when he said, "Take care of your mother." He cared for His mother even there from the Cross. I believe there is a picture of honor and a picture of beauty and a picture of blessing in that and that it speaks to all of us about the importance of caring for our families. Now I know that sometimes it is not possible, especially as the years go on, to always provide all of the physical care that is necessary and sometimes we need help and support and thank God for institutions that help us to do that but never let that institution be your substitute for your faithful remembrance and for your love for your parents. Honor them. Remember them. Let them know they did make a positive contribution to your life.

So what have we said the scripture says to us this morning? Honor your father and your mother; recover the principle of honor. Honor father and mother that we need to address the issue of the character of parents and we need to recommit ourselves as parents to that matter of being the parents that God wants us to be and then we need to respond with steps of action. We need to demonstrate in our life what it means and what it looks like to honor our parents.

Finally, we need to reclaim the promise of God. For the bible says, "when you honor your father and your mother it will be well with you and your days will be long upon the

earth.” It is found not only here in the book of Exodus but it is found in the book of Proverbs, it is found again in the New Testament, specifically echoed and repeated in the book of Ephesians and over and over the Bible tells us that wellness, wholeness, and completion in life, fullness of life, has to do with our family. Certainly, one of the goals of this message this morning has been to challenge a new generation of young people to commit themselves to honoring and following God’s plan for the family and to call all of us to a deeper commitment to honor. I believe blessing comes out of that honor. But I want you to know that while I definitely believe that this promise encourages the idea of longevity, I believe there is one other thing that might be included in it and that is not only longevity but also freedom. Because, you see, it is well with you and your days are long upon the earth when you live your life freely instead of living your life in bondage. It might just be that God brought you to this place this morning so that rather than just going through the holidays again and just faking it again, maybe today the Word of God would just bring you to a place where you face it and where you would begin to deal with some of the injury and some of the hurt and some of the bondage and some of the unfinished business that is still present in your family and that you would let God use this moment this moment and that God would use His Word to break the destructive cycle that is so often present in our lives and to bring us to a place of freedom and forgiveness.

Now, again, all of this begins not with the family. It begins with the Father. Because, you see, that is the first step. It is getting rightly related to God. I cannot begin to be rightly related to others. Listen, you cannot be the parent, you cannot be the child, you cannot be the friend, you cannot be the brother, the sister, you cannot have the family that you want to have unless you have it in the Lord. Because, unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain in building it. Unless you give your life to Christ and unless you begin by getting a right relationship with God you will never have a right relationship here. So, this morning, I want to close this service by giving you an opportunity to get rightly connected to God, to honor Him first in your life, then to be able to honor them, your family, as you go forward in the days to come.

I want to ask that heads be bowed and eyes be closed. I do not want anyone to be stirring or moving during these moments of invitation. I simply want to ask you this question, this morning, “are you right in your relationship with God?” Has there ever been a moment in your life where you have recognized that regardless of the family in which you were born there is a personal problem to be dealt with? It is the problem of sin. You don’t have to teach a child to be defiant; we are born with a rebel nature. What we need in our life is to come under surrender and submission to God in our life. This morning, this moment, may be God’s moment of calling you to Himself. Maybe never before in your life have you confessed that sense of rebellion and that sense of desire to give your life to Christ. If not, I want to give you an opportunity to do that. No one is stirring and no one is looking. Right there in the privacy of this moment I simply want to encourage you to pray this prayer with me: Dear Lord Jesus, today I confess that I am a sinner and Lord I confess that I want to be saved. I want to be right. I want to be whole. Jesus remove from me today the attitude of rebellion. Today I choose the attitude of submission and surrender to You. Come into my heart Lord Jesus. Make me the person you want me to be. Help me to build the family that You would have me to build. Lord, I want to be a part of your family and honor you with my life.

While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you simply prayed that prayer, not so much the words that I have said but just the attitude of your heart, God sees it and He has promised that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Today, this moment, may have been a defining moment in your heart, in your life, a moment of salvation and, if so, I thank God for that and I rejoice in that. With no one looking, I just want to be able to rejoice with you a moment and so, if you have prayed that prayer, would just slip your hand up wherever you are and just let me see you hand. Just up and then down. Up and then down. You might be right here near the front. You may be out off to the very back of this building. Just up and down. What an important step this is in your life. You know others of you this morning have already prayed and made that commitment to Christ but you need to get settled in a church home. You have the foundation that is needed for building a family home but you need a church home where you can grow with other believers. Maybe today you are praying about that in your life

and you would give me the privilege of praying for you right now. If that is where you are, would you just slip up your hand and just say, “I am praying about commitment to a local church, praying about commitment to Boca Raton Community Church. Pastor, would you pray for me today?” Would you just lift your hand up because you need a healthy relationship with a church. God bless you, so many!

Father, today, You see and know our hearts. We realize we cannot fake it in this hour with you, you see right through us. So, Lord, I just want to thank You for the honesty that has been demonstrated in these moments together, some who are searching for Your will about a church home. But, Lord, thank you this morning for others who in this moment have received Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Father, I pray that this service will be the beginning of a new beginning in their life, that they will follow You, that they will walk with You, and that they will grow with You. I pray it in Jesus’ name. Amen

I want you to look up here. We are going to stand in just a moment and sing a hymn of invitation.

Sermon given on 11/22/98 by Dr. David McKinley