

Understanding Covenant Theology

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 May 2024

Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0 : 0 0] and I will get you into a text as quickly as possible. We're talking about covenant theology this morning. Again, we began last week to discuss principles of covenant theology, and I was thinking this week about a saying that I've heard throughout the years and said in different ways, and that is this problem that all people who run things have, and that the problem is is that you get so busy working the business that you don't have time to work on the business.

Have you heard that phrase before? You get so busy working the business, but you don't have any time to work on the business, and this is true not only of businesses, but this is true of churches and families, and every organization requires both doing the stuff you're supposed to do day to day, but also taking a step back and understanding from a more strategic and structural perspective, like what is going on here?

What sort of big things do I need to be thinking about? So on and so forth. And today, as we consider covenant theology, we'll be thinking at that level, that kind of big level.

We'll try to be understanding kind of the structure of everything in some respects. Back in the 1980s, a man who was a Christian economist was asked to write the foreword for a book, and in the foreword to the book, he said in his experience, in his study, kind of every organization, every institution, whatever, they really can only thrive to the extent that these five questions that he listed are understood, answered, and agreed upon.

He said, these are the five questions you have to have answers to for anything to work like it should, whether that be a business or a home or a church.

[1 : 5 3] And those five questions, who is in charge here? Who do I report to? What are the rules? What do I get for obeying or disobeying? And what is my future with this organization?

And also, what is the future of the organization in general? And he identified this list as being nearly universal and necessary for anything to thrive.

You have to have everybody in your home agree to the answers to these questions. You need to have everybody in your business agree to the answer to these questions. The same with the church and the government and so on and so forth. Now, what I found interesting is that he wrote these questions in a forward to a book, not about government, not about family, not about business, but he wrote these questions in the forward to a book about covenant theology.

And that is because the author of the book, a man named Ray Sutton, had during a period of his time when he was sick and he was recovering and he wasn't, what do pastors do when they get sick and they can't like pastor?

They just studied the Bible more a lot of times. And that's what this guy did named Ray. He had a very serious burn. He was in quite a bit of pain and thought, well, while I'm immobilized because of this injury, I'm just going to spend a lot of time studying this idea of covenant because I don't think I really understand it.

[3 : 1 2] And so he went into the scriptures and said, I want to understand what covenant theology is all about. And he began to develop an outline over a pattern, connected to a pattern that he saw in the scriptures.

And I want to show you that pattern today. I want to help you to see why, where it is all over scripture. And I want to help you to see how you use it to answer these questions. So the next slide, I think, is a slide that goes over his particular, this is what this pastor named Ray came up with, and he called it Theos.

And he says that all of the Bible is structured in these five areas. So when God speaks to people covenantally, these are the five things we see.

When we talk about transcendence, we talked about this last week. What we mean by transcendence is that God is high and separate and different than everything else.

He is not subject to any of the rules of the universe. He's not made, right? He's the maker. He's unmade. But also God is entirely concerned about what you do, what you don't do, what you think, what you say, and so on and so forth.

[4 : 27] And the word that probably summarizes what we mean when we talk about the transcendence and presence of God is the word holiness. The word holiness is really the word that is used in the scriptures to refer to both things at the same time, a God who is separate and distinct and other, who also cares entirely about the state, the sinful or lack of sinful state of human beings.

So this theologian says that when God talks to a group of people, you always see this piece laid down foundationally, God's holiness, his transcendence and presence.

And the next thing you see is hierarchy. And just for the sake of this, because we're going to be as simple as possible, really what we think of as hierarchy is God chooses a person to sort of be the representative of this particular covenantal action.

So last week we looked at Noah, and we saw that Noah was the mediator of the Noahic covenant and so on. And then the next thing that we see is like ethics. What does ethics mean?

It means how should I behave given this particular covenant? And then we have from there, we have oaths, which is really like this is what's going to happen to you if you obey or if you disobey.

[5 : 47] And then succession is often tied in with oaths, and succession is just this is what the future looks like. Okay. Now, if this is beginning to feel overly abstract and academic, I just want you to know it is absolutely not, because this is God's answers to the five questions that you saw before.

Okay. This is, these two things are completely the same thing. These five questions, I think you can understand whether you know the Bible or not.

Who's in charge here? Who do I report to? What are the rules? What do I get for obeying or disobeying? And what's the future look like with this organization? You probably know just intuitively, no matter how well you know the Bible, you probably know intuitively that those five questions are basically the predictor of the future of an organization, of family and church, or so forth.

If there's agreement on these things and these answers are correct and everybody agrees upon them, then you're going to have a thriving organization. But if you don't have agreement on these things, you're going to have a lot of problems.

A lot of times we think, typically, that an organization is dysfunctional because not everybody agrees on what they're supposed to be doing. That's somewhat true. But also, an organization is really dysfunctional when they don't even agree who the boss is.

[7 : 10] And that can actually happen where individuals working on a same team might have completely different understandings of who's actually in charge on this particular project. And, of course, this happens in the home all the time.

And that's where we're going to lead. That's where we're going to wind up today. We're going to wind up talking extensively about the home. Now, what I want you to see first, because as you read your Bible, I think it will bless you to see this, is that this structure is present all over the Bible.

This structure is present all over the Bible. The truth is that God has been speaking to you this way the whole time. If you've read your Bible, God has been speaking to you with this formula intact in essentially every scripture in many respects.

So let me give you a few examples. What is the most famous Bible verse in the world? Would it be John 3.16? It was, at least for some time, John 3.16, certainly.

Well, let's think about John 3.16. John 3.16, for God so loved the world. God, transcendence, he's over the world. He cares about the world. He's concerned about the world.

[8 : 18] So there we have our T and the answer to the first question. Who's in charge here? God's in charge. He loved the world. He gave his only son. Who do I report to? Jesus.

I report to Jesus. Like, Jesus is the mediator of this covenant. He's the H. He's the hierarchical piece of the covenant. What do I do? What are the ethical responsibilities?

I believe in Jesus. Who's in charge here? God. Who did he appoint as his mediator at the top of his hierarchy? Jesus. What am I supposed to do?

Ethics. Believe in Jesus. What happens if I believe in Jesus? I won't perish. And what's my future look like? I'll have eternal life. And so this formula is actually present in the scriptures everywhere.

Let's look at another passage of Deuteronomy 6. Deuteronomy 6 says, now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over to possess it.

[9 : 22] Just beginning there, we see this commandment comes from the Lord, the transcendence and holiness of the Lord, and that it's given through a mediator. And who's that mediator?

Well, the verse says, this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you. Who's me in this passage? Moses. So God says, here's God.

And then God says, listen to Moses, because he has my words. He's going to tell you what to do. And then he says that you may do them in the land to which you are going over to possess it.

So now we get into ethics. We've established God's transcendence. We've figured out who the mediator of the covenant is, Moses. And now we get into, well, what are the rules? What do I do?

And God says, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's sons, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.

[10 : 20] Pause there. So what am I supposed to do? I'm supposed to do the commandments. I'm supposed to do the stuff that God tells me to do. And what are the consequences? What are the benefits of obedience? What do I get if I obey, if I follow the rules?

He says, your days will be long. Hear, therefore, Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.

So there we see the consequences, and not only the short-term consequences, but the long-term consequences. We see the future. And so we've got T, which is the transcendence and eminence of God.

We've got H, which is the hierarchy. Who am I actually listening to? God sent somebody, but who is that person? It's Moses here. What am I supposed to do?

E, the ethics. E, the ethics. Follow the commandments. What happens if I obey? I get to go into the land. It's a land flowing with milk and honey, and I get to be there a long time. Succession.

[11 : 20] So again and again and again, you'll see in Scripture this particular formula working through. Now, you won't always see these things in the exact same order.

So when you're reading Scripture, don't always think, like, well, it starts with the T, then goes to the H. No. These five questions, who's in charge? Who do I report to? What do I do? So on.

These five questions are what you should be looking for. These are the – they're not always going to appear in order. For instance, look at Colossians 3, 22.

Here we have God's covenantal structure for the workplace dynamic.

Okay? This is God's covenantal structure for the workplace dynamic. God actually, when he instructs people how to behave within the workplace, he actually uses covenantal structure. Verse 22 of Colossians 3, bond servants, obeying everything that you, those who are your earthly masters.

[12 : 23] Not by way of eye service, as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

You are serving the Lord Christ, for the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. So they're not in order, but all of our questions are answered in this text.

Who's in charge here? Three times we see fearing the Lord, verse 22. Work heartily for the Lord, verse 23. You're serving Christ, verse 24. Who do I report to?

What's the answer in this text to who do I report to? Who's in charge? God's in charge. I'm really ultimately serving him, but who do I report to in this text? I work heartily for earthly masters.

My boss is the mediator of this particular covenant. He's the one I report to. God's in charge, but I report to my boss. What are the rules?

[13 : 23] I obey my boss in everything with sincerity of heart, verse 22. I work heartily, verse 23. What do I get for obeying or disobeying?

If I obey, I receive an inheritance from the Lord, verse 24. If I disobey, the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, verse 25. What is the future?

Well, it's blended in, but it's inheritance, the future justice of God. So like every institution, every structure, everything that exists in the world, this is as close as you'll get to a real theory of everything.

It is essentially the answer to these five questions, these five questions being asked over and over and over again in the world, in every organization you're a part of, every unit of social structure that you're a part of.

These are the questions. Okay? So now let's think about how sin screws this all up. So let's ask those same five questions, but from the perspective of someone who is what we would call either a formal or informal individualist.

[14 : 31] Okay? This person is just for themselves. They're not attached to any covenantal structure, but they still have to have answers to these five questions. Because these five questions are just, you just have to have answers to them.

You can't do life without answers to them. So let's think about how an individualist would answer these five questions. Who's in charge here? Well, that's easy. How would an atheistic, humanistic person answer that question?

Who's in charge here? Me. I'm in charge here. And then the next one is, well, who do I report to? And you might think, well, this is a little confusing because if the person's in charge, then why is there someone else that they're reporting to?

Well, that's just the way that God structured the world. There's always an over, and then there's a second, and so on and so forth. So how would an individualist handle this question, this second question, who do I report to?

An individualist is like, I'm in charge. And then I say, okay, but who do you listen to? And the answer is, well, probably a certain part of me. This is what's interesting about people is that even people develop hierarchies of structure within themselves.

[15 : 41] And so, like, for one person, their sexuality is the thing they report to primarily. And to another person, their intellect is the thing that they report to primarily.

So even the radical individualist has a hierarchical structure within himself, and he listens to certain voices inside of himself more than others. And Paul says in Ephesians 2, for instance, that people are enslaved by their various passions.

What does that mean? It's like, it means that the passions are my boss. I do what my passions tell me to. So an individualist is like, who's in charge? I am. Who do you listen to?

Probably my sexuality or my intellect or my power or my strength or my greed or whatever. Like, a certain part of me comes to the fore. What are the rules?

Well, the rules are, do what your passions tell you to. What are the consequences if you disobey? Here's the, you start to hear this in talk from humanists.

[16 : 43] And some of you are humanists. You just don't know it. But here's the, what are the consequences to disobeying or obeying? I won't be true to myself.

That's, see, there are always consequences. These answers, these questions are pervasive. It's like, who's in charge? I am. Who do I report to? My sexuality.

What are the rules? Be true to yourself. What are the consequences if you aren't true to yourself? Repression. Sadness. Missing out. Humanistic hell.

What is hell for a humanist? It's not being true to yourself. Somehow, if you violate the be true to yourself standard, you've entered into Dante's Inferno for humanists.

You are in the worst place possible. You have not been true to yourself. And what about the future? I mean, it varies. You know, you can make up your own version of heaven, whatever.

[17 : 43] Whatever. There's lots of options this far down the chain. But you can see how sin actually answers these questions because these questions must be answered. And so if we know that sin answers these questions because these questions must be answered, maybe we would be interested in saying, how does God answer these questions?

Because I could see a lot of problems flowing out of me answering these questions without God. So let's now shift and think specifically about this structure at work in your home.

Let's think about this structure at work in your home. And first, let's acknowledge some problems. The first problem is, is that every part of this structure depends on you believing that there is a God who is all-powerful and fully present.

And the problem is, is that a home, in a home, both husband and wife are burdened by a sin nature that does not see God as he is.

And so from the very beginning, having a covenantally sound home is difficult because husband and wife, apart from the work of God, don't see God and don't delight in his holiness like they should.

[19 : 08] And there's another problem that comes up. So when you do an expansive study of all of the times God shows himself to be transcendent in the scriptures, he shows himself to be transcendent through his acts as creator, his acts as revealer, and his acts as redeemer.

So these are the three ways God shows his holiness, through creation, redemption, and revelation. And guess what? There's this really interesting thing when we flip over a rock and we realize, oh my goodness, the world has alternative explanations for all of this.

So if we take God at his word, he created the world, and therefore we see God as transcendent because he created the world. Or we could listen to another voice and say, God didn't create the world.

And in that way, our sense of God's transcendence is obscured. We could see God at work in his word and say, God wrote a book, it's the Holy Bible, and all scripture is breathed out by God and useful for teaching and so on and so forth.

And we could see God's transcendence. God wrote a book, here's the book. Or we can say, that's a book written by man. And we could see God's transcendence in his initiating salvation.

[20 : 21] And we can say, God redeemed us. He stepped into the situation and he chose us. We did not choose him. And we could see God's transcendence in salvation. Or we can say, well, no, salvation is my idea.

I'm the one that initiates salvation. And so, like, actually our ability to see God as husbands and wives, for instance, just as people, to see God as truly holy, it's quite challenging.

Not only because of our own sin, but because of the world and the flesh and the devil. It all works together. Well, that's one difficulty.

But there's another difficulty. It's like, how do I have a home that is covenantally sound? Well, the first one is, is we have a problem. We're sinners and we don't see God as transcendent in the way that we ought to.

There's a second problem. And that is, we all struggle to embrace and appreciate God's hierarchical structures in various covenants.

[21 : 22] When we get to the covenant, when we get to the rules of work and we say, obey your masters, obey your boss and everything. Well, you don't like that very much. It's one thing to give me an abstract, God's in charge.

But it's another thing to tell me, and now you've got to listen to Moses. And Moses is a murderer, and he seems to not always be on the ball. We don't like the hierarchical structure.

And in terms of marriage, a husband, he's been ordained by God to be the main mediator, to be the Moses of the marriage, so to speak. But just like Moses, husbands often lack the faith to obey and lack the faith to take up the job with enthusiasm.

Or also like Moses, sometimes he accepts the responsibility and oversteps his role. And he goes too far, and he winds up making himself the top of the structure instead of the one who works for God.

And the wife is just like her husband. And she too lacks faith, and she struggles that God knew what he was doing when he gave her this husband. And she looks at the position of her husband as the mediator on the hierarchy, and she wonders if maybe she wouldn't do a better job.

- [22 : 36] Or she makes him more than he is and doesn't just see him as the mediator of this covenant, but as the top of the chain, as needing to be truly transcendent and holy.
- And sometimes the wife or the husband just misunderstands the scriptures, and they think that the hierarchy piece is the top of the chain. It's not. God's always in charge.
- So you've got a lot of challenges in creating a covenantal home. We are not especially good at seeing God and appreciating his holiness.
- And we don't especially love God's plans related to hierarchies. But there's a third problem that enters.
- Children as covenantal crisis. Children as covenantal crisis.
- [23 : 34] So husband and wife, before kids, they're already really hanging on by a thread to the whole idea of covenant. They have their own struggles with God's transcendence and with hierarchy and so on.
- And then they make a baby. And the baby is born with bad information about the covenant. So let's go through those questions again.
- Let's interview a baby. Ask this baby, give me the answer to these five questions. Who's in charge here, baby?
- Me. For sure. Who do I report to? The baby's like, well, am I sleepy? If so, that. Am I hungry? If then, that.
- Am I sad? Am I curious? Are my pants messy? There could be a potential, like a large number of potential bosses in the moment. So who's in charge?
- [24 : 33] Me. Who do I report to? The thing that's front and center. The most acute need in my small existence. What are the rules, baby?
- So you're in charge. And you report to this appetite that you have, this thing. What are the rules? Like, do the thing your appetite tells you to do. Like, food, sleep, diaper change, lick the outlet, Phineas.
- Whatever. Whatever. It's like, do the thing that the desire says to do. And then it's like, well, baby, what happens if you don't get this? Baby's like, I will die.
- Are you kidding me? If you don't feed me soon, I will die. I am sure. I have never felt. Babies are such wimps. Like, we know what a hunger pain is, you know? That's nothing like stubbing your toe or something. But to them, that's the most acute pain they've ever felt in their life.
- And so they think they're going to die. It's like, if I don't get food, it's over. I'm done. What's my future? Well, it depends if you feed me or not. Because if not, I'm dead. So babies enter this already questionable covenantal structure as real challenges to the very notions of covenant.
- [25 : 48] And parents are going to have to decide, are we going to rule and subdue and teach this kiddo the rules of the covenant and replace their wrong answers with the right ones?
- Or will we just decide to make the baby the boss? Well, look at Ephesians chapter 6. This will be our last text, main text of the message.
- Ephesians chapter 6. Paul knows that this is a real thing. And so after writing to wives and husbands in the previous chapter, he says to children, Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
- Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- So where's the covenant structure? Who's in charge? God's in charge. Who do I report to? I report to my parents. What are the rules? I obey them.

[27 : 06] What do I get if I obey? It will go well with me. What is the future? I will live long in the land. Now let's talk about some of the finer details of all of this as it relates particularly to children.

First thing that we've got to see time and time again is that this belief in a God who is all powerful and fully present is essential to right thinking and right acting.

You see, everything in this text depends on a child believing that God is fully present and fully powerful.

I want you to really think about this for a minute because this is extremely unique to Christianity. Secondly, obedience to children or children obeying their parents is seen as an act of worship that the child is responsible to undertake because the child believes in God.

So we tend to think of obedience to us as the point. But obedience to us is not the point any more than my obedience to my boss is the point.

[28 : 17] It's unto the Lord and the text explicitly says that. It says, children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. When Paul says this is right, he's using the language, for instance, in Romans 12.1 where he says, this is your proper act of worship.

He's telling children, obey your parents because that's what you should do as worshipers of God. Without that, without God being all powerful and present, there is no reason to obey.

Now, there are other parenting plans out there, unfortunately. And there are other ways to get your children to do what you want them to do.

And one of the best ones is to do what they want to do but say it was your idea. No, that's a terrible one. People really like that one. There are all these alternative ways to parent.

But think of, like, how that plays out. Here's the idea. Children who have no sense of God's presence and power will in the short term obey their parents.

[29 : 35] And they may do so out of some affection for their parents. Or they may do so out of some fear for their parents. Or they may do so out of simple pragmatism. But if they do not see the Lord as seeing them, knowing them, evaluating their behavior, rewarding and disciplining them appropriately all the way into eternity, then eventually you'll have children who do what Paul warns the slaves not to do.

And that is be what Paul calls I slaves. It's the apthos doulou. It's a compound word. What is apthos doulou?

It means eye pleaser, eye servant. Acting the way you're supposed to when the eyes are on you. And if you don't have the transcendence of God, you've only got human eyes.

And so a lot of children growing up in Christian homes who do not know God and have not been taught to know God, are eye pleasers who quickly grow in their capacity to deceive and say what they need to say to deal in the moment with light and momentary, like the surface conflicts.

And this really is, if you think about it, the problem. Not just with parenting, with just people. Eye pleasing. I'm going to behave as long as the person who has the power to do something about my disobedience is present.

[31 : 11] But as soon as that's gone, I will begin to misbehave. And this is why it's so important for parents to help kids to see as quickly as possible that the answer to who's in charge here isn't me.

It's God. There's this period of time early on in a child's life where they are somewhat confused about whether or not you might be God.

And they're like, you know, it's a possibility for them. They're not quite sure. They think maybe you're omniscient and they think maybe you're all-powerful. And they're like, it's possible that my dad's God.

And during that period of time, the obedience-disobedience thing is kind of held in sway. Also, for another reason, I'll get to in a moment.

But over time, they realize, okay, you don't see everything. You're not aware. But initially, they realize that you're not God. But they also lack intelligence, freedom, and sophistication to exploit that information.

[32 : 16] Right? Like there's this period of time where your kids realize you're not God, but they're not smart enough to do anything really good with it. And they often wind up like turning themselves in accidentally even, right?

So that's a sweet period of time because their kind of, their dumbness is counteracting their insight into the fact that you're not God, right?

So there's a sweet little moment. But see, over time, they get to be more sophisticated and intelligent in their deceptions and their disobedience.

Right? And here's what we're talking about, parents. We're talking about diligently attempting, as much as it lies within our power, to help them grow in their sophistication and knowledge of God.

At the same pace, or hopefully a greater pace, than they're growing in their intelligence and sophistication of sin. But the goal of Christian parenting, if you could summarize in one thing, is help these people believe that God is all-powerful and fully interested in all things.

[33 : 25] That's the goal. If you can get the transcendence and eminence piece right in parenting, you've really gone quite far in the effort.

Now, just pause and zoom back out, not just talk about parenting, let's talk about all of us. Are you struggling with deception? Are you struggling with being an eye-pleasing worker of righteousness?

Like, as long as the eyes are on you, you're okay. But when they're not, you're not. This isn't just a kiddo problem, right? This is the thing all of us struggle with.

Are you, if you were honest, just with yourself, are you a bit of a Pharisee right now? Right? Like, outwardly, things are tight, cleaned up.

Basically, you know how to behave when the eyes are on you, eyes are off of you. There's some real inconsistencies. And it's like, why is that?

[34 : 28] What's going on? It's the T. It's the T in the covenant structure. It's the first question, who's in charge here? You just are having trouble, for all potential sorts of reasons, and this is why you want to have conversations with Christian friends who can help you.

But if that's your problem, I can tell you for sure where to go to start to fix it. And that is to begin to seek the fear of the Lord. Believe in the holiness of the Lord in a way that you have probably just let slip over time.

Over time, our faith grows weak. Our love grows cold. And the God that we once believed in that was all-powerful and all-present begins to slip. Sin deceives, and we stop remembering that he cares, and it matters to him.

Okay, so back to parenting. I want you to see just a few things about the hierarchy, and that's the last thing we'll look at. In this particular text, in Ephesians 6, Paul gives children clarity about who's in charge here?

God. Who do I report to? Parents. And the first thing I want you to notice is parents as in plural. One of the great crisis of the Oswald home, probably 10 years ago or more, more than 10 years ago, was when my kids weren't listening to my wife like they ought to.

[35 : 56] She just didn't spank as hard. And so I remember I would have these. Before I would go into work, I would have these, because she's going to be there homeschooling them all day, and I would have these, like, pep talks with her.

I'd be like, you have got this. Like, you are a powerful woman. You don't let these kids ignore you. You make them listen to you and so on. And, like, it's like, you know, it's like cheering her up and getting her hyped up for the game that day.

And one day, you know, we've been really working on this, and all three kids were being terrible early in the morning, and she called a meeting with the kids.

She's like, come here. She gets all three of them there, and she just is like, now listen. You people need to fear my wrath. And she lost them.

She lost them right then. All opportunities for fear were cast. They all laughed, unfortunately. But the text says really clearly, children, obey your parents.

[36 : 59] And then it says in verse 2, honor your father and your mother. Children, obey your parents. Honor your father and your mother. So there's a few things to think about related to covenantal parenting, and the first one is sometimes mothers get the short end of the stick on the front end, like my wife.

And I know some of you ladies have been dealing with this as well. It's like you're not the – you don't bring the boom in the same way. It's like, well, dads, we help with this because it's hard enough to be a mom, let alone a mom that isn't being listened to properly and respected and so on and so forth.

So it's a huge thing that our moms are honored and obeyed. The text says that very clearly. Over time, the script can flip, especially with older children.

And moms can sometimes become the favorite, in part, for some of the same reasons they weren't listened to initially. Sometimes adult children can edge out, especially dad, mostly for sinful reasons.

And so I would just tell you, dads, verse 4 says, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline of the Lord. I would say very clearly that the formula for raising covenantal kids is a two-parent household, and many men who would say that vehemently, two-parent household, two-parent household, two-parent household, are basically checked out of their young adult children's lives.

[38 : 30] It's like you have a voice, and it's a necessary voice, and the buck stops with you, as it says in verse 4. It also seems to be important to stipulate that just because your child gets angry doesn't mean you provoke them to anger.

That's not what this text is saying. Okay. So let's look at this last piece, because what Paul's doing here is something that you'll see God do a lot with covenants.

He tells the people, here's who I'm in charge, here's who you listen to. And then he'll tell that person, that mediator, that person in the hierarchy, he'll tell that person, here's some things you have to do.

God has high expectations for his mediators, the mediators of his covenant. And so he says to the fathers here in verse 4, dads, don't provoke your children to anger, but raise them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

And what Paul's doing here is he's touching on classic requirements for the mediator. And they're basically throughout all scripture, when God appoints a mediator for the covenant, he gives them four basic rules.

[39 : 38] Number one, give them my word. Number two, be patient with them. Number three, do not be permissive. And number four, die to yourself.

Every single time God brings a man in to mediate a covenant, he tells them to do those four things. Bring them my word, be patient, don't be permissive, and die to yourself.

So for instance, when Paul in Ephesians 20 is reviewing his work amongst the Ephesians, he says in two categories. I was patient with you, humble. I did work on my own. I didn't covet your silver or gold.

And then he says, and I also didn't limp out. I did not cease night and day to admonish you with tears. So these four ideas, die to yourself, don't be too permissive, be super patient, and give them your word.

This is the rules if you are mediating a covenant. Moms and dads, that's what you're doing. Give them the word, be patient, don't be permissive, and die to yourself.

[40 : 41] Every mediator of a covenant you can go through the scriptures has to die to themselves a lot. It's first typified when Adam falls into a great sleep and gives up a part of himself.

Noah is initiated into building the ark, which is a huge reputational hit. He looks like an idiot. He's dying to himself reputationally. And then he enters the ark prefigured or typed as a covenant or as a coffin or as a grave of some sort.

Abraham was initiated into his covenant by leaving his father's household and then allowing even his son Isaac to potentially be sacrificed. Moses' whole life is a death-resurrection cycle broken up in 40-year increments, more or less.

David had to die to himself in being honorable towards Saul as Saul was pursuing him. And every mediator of truth in the scriptures is called to die to himself. Jacob, Joseph, Jeremiah, Daniel, John the Baptist.

So mom and dad, in order to be faithful covenant mediators, it's definitely knowing the answers to these five questions and teaching the answers to those five questions. But most importantly, to be a faithful covenant mediator, you have to die to yourself and trust the Lord and give them your word.

[41 : 54] Give them God's word and be patient. And don't be overly permissive. You need to die to yourself over and over again. Jesus says in John 17, right before he's arrested, he prays for the people.

And one of the things he says over and over again to God, I gave them your word. He says it multiple times. I did it. I gave them your word. Mediators, moms and dads, give them your word.

Let me pray. Let me pray. Lord God, I thank you that we have time on Sunday to work through pieces of information.

I'm so thankful that next week get to come back and make even more application to these truths we find in your word. Lord, I thank you, God, that you are a God of covenant.

That you lead, initiate, engage with us in ways that are plain and clear. That you let us know the answers to these five crucial questions so that we can flourish, prosper in you.

[43 : 06] God, I pray that you would give us faith. As we consider just the complexities, the glories of your covenant, God, give us faith to say you are an amazing, glorious God.

Lord, we praise you and pray this word would do the work in our hearts that you have ordained for it to do. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Well, listen as I read probably the main communion text that we use anyway in 1 Corinthians 11. Listen to the covenant categories that come through.

Paul's speaking. He says, I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you. That the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread.

And when he'd given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup and after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

[44 : 08] Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. One of the most crucial pieces of observing communion, Paul says it here, is what you're doing is you're proclaiming, my God died.

Think about that, how Paul chose to make that explicit in his commands regarding communion. He says, my God, my Savior died. You proclaim the Lord's death when you come.

So what's the point of that? Why is he saying that? Why is it important that we proclaim the Lord's death? Well, because it tells us how we should live. It tells us that we should follow his example.

And not only that we should follow his example, but that our ability to follow him has been paid for by his death and resurrection. So come and partake of the communion of the Lord's table.