

Is It Necessary To Become a Prodigal Son? Luke 15

By Dennis Guernsey

Announcer:

[recording begins abruptly] ...is extremely versatile in light of the fact that he has done a great deal of counseling and has had so much experience with the adoption of children. And I haven't heard him include any of that in the messages. Maybe he will this morning, also teaching. He's been at Biola College and at Talbot Seminary, now is over at Fuller, preaching and teaching the word of God literally all around the United States. We're just delighted to have him back. And I'm so glad that he's coming this morning to open the Word again. Dr. Dennis Guernsey.

Dennis Guernsey:

Around Southern California, as you drive the freeways, many of you have seen billboards of various country and Western stars. And the billboards say, "we all grew up to be Cowboys." And it is an Advertisement for radio station KHG that has been rocked for all these years, has now gone country and Western, and they presume upon the fact that we have, in all fact, in essence, grown up to be Cowboys. It's a declarative statement that says there is inside us all that cowboy nature. And I sometimes think in some ways that may be true. I see people walking around trying to be Cowboys that look like they came out from Brooklyn or something, and that's all right. We won't hold that against you. And there is another, in a sense, statement that has reference to folk like yourself, a statement that perhaps isn't found on billboards but is found in many of your psychology textbooks. It is the statement that we must all rebel in order to be healthy persons, that it is inevitable for young persons in order to have declared their independence from family

systems, to have asserted themselves and just kind of kick loose the traces both with regards to their parents and regards to their parents God.

And that somehow, if you haven't kind of blended yourself into a lifestyle that is opposite, whatever the opposite is of your own parent and family system and somehow you are not mature. Well, we are looking in my two sessions in this main time with you at the story told by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15, the story of the prodigal son through the eyes of a family therapist. And I suggested that in this parable told by Jesus there are really four persons. There is obviously the father, and we'll deal with him today. There is the prodigal son who is in the distant far country, who has, in fact, rebelled. And then there is the enmeshed son, the elder son, who was at home and never kicked free and left father and mother in that sense of the term. And then I'm going to suggest that today not only will we look at the father briefly, but we'll look at the return prodigal, the alternative to being a prodigal or being the elder son. And I used two words that I wanted you to kind of begin to think about. One word was the word disengaged, unplugged, that sometimes people deal with attentions and the struggles within their own family by pulling free and by taking off.

And that can take place both physically in the sense of running away, in the sense of getting on a freeway and driving somewhere. And it can take place emotionally. It is possible for disengaged people, in a sense, to be in the same room, but to be unplugged emotionally from other folk. And we talked about disengagement. The elder son, through the eyes of the family therapist, is enmeshed, a person who is fused to the person of his own family system, especially his father in this case, and is marked by wanting more from his father than his father has given him,

resentment, et cetera. And we've talked about that, really disengagement and measurement are two kinds of strategies psychologically that people use to deal with a certain kind of family system. But I'm going to suggest that in terms of family therapy, there's a third alternative that I think is both biblical and certainly more psychologically healthy. You might ask yourselves the question, how much of this third alternative, how much does it apply to me? Can I see myself in terms of this continuum of disengagement and enmeshment? But somewhere here in the middle is the process we call differentiation.

And so this morning, what I'm going to do for you is talk a bit about that third alternative. And then we're going to ask the question, how do people get differentiated? What kind of family systems differentiate? What kind of family systems enmesh and disengage? What are the biblical norms for that? And then I'd like to give you some hints for those of us who may be disengaged, for those of us who may be enmeshed, some strategies of how to work that through and begin the process of working that through within our own lives. So let's begin. The first major point that I like to suggest is that the legitimate alternative to both disengagement and enmeshment is the process of differentiation. Let me define differentiation. Differentiation is that process by which the person establishes his or her own separateness from the family of origin, while at the same time maintaining the possibility of person to person relationships and emotional closeness. Let me go through and think that through with you. I'll say it again. Some of you don't take shorthand. All right. That process by which the person establishes his or her own separateness, that's the first key term.

When you were born physically in the world, there came a time in that birthing process that somebody cut the cord. And in the cutting the cord, you became physically separate. But it's obviously you did not kind of pop out of the birth canal, say, Hi, mom, how in the world are you? Walk on out the delivery room and say, see you in 21 years.

You were in a natural state of physical dependency, although you were no longer physically joined, you couldn't do anything for yourself. Very few of you had learned to diaper yourself by the age of three months. I am assuming that most of you couldn't feed yourself until quite a bit later. And that process of physical dependency has attached to it then a great deal of emotional dependency. And the fact of the matter is the process of growing up is, A) establishing the bonds with that mother and that father, the bonds emotionally. But then coming to the place where not only are you able to be secure in that sense of closeness, but then eventually you can be separate emotionally, that is, that you can have opinions of your own, that you can be responsible for yourself, that you can want to make up your own mind, that you can think it through for yourself, that you can have a position that is different from somebody else, that when you take a step in the sand, it is your footprint that is left and not someone else's.

Being able to maintain and develop separateness. Now, a lot of us think that when we develop separateness, we do it kind of by battling and fighting our way out of this kind of cocoon emotionally. And I've suggested that not maintaining separateness really has to do with the disengagement process. But differentiation is working through that own sense of emotional separateness. You see, there's a very real sense in which the parent-child relationship is meant by God to self-destruct. Let me say that again, there's a very real sense in which the parent-child

relationship is meant to self-destruct. Parent child is inherently a vertical relationship between two people in which the child is usually a beginning physically dependent, but emotionally dependent. God intends, I believe, that relationship to begin over time, to rotate, to eventually you relate to your parents as adults. You can still be your mother's daughter without being your mother's child. In the issue of family therapy, what I find out amongst many Christian people, we take those verses in the book of Ephesian of honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment or the promise that honor of your father and mother implicitly means maintain the parent-child relationship, do what they tell you to do.

The relationship that rotates, and I'm going to suggest from my perspective as a family therapist, that the greatest privilege and the greatest honor that I can have with my father and mother is to come to that place where I am both separate, but I can be close. And we're going to talk about it. And that's what differentiation is all about, coming to the place where you have the opportunity and the freedom to feel good about going home and to feel good about being there. Separateness. Maintaining the possibility of person to person relationships and emotional closeness. Now, when there is something inside you that says, I have to go, I must be there, that compulsion; that coercion that comes out of kind of obligation that says I cannot be a separate person to make decisions of my own. That's a hint that we're struggling inside with the process of disengagement or enmeshment. Let me give you an example of how family systems work. Now I have permission from my mother-in-law to talk about her. Okay. A delightful person. I married in my fourth year of Biola. I married this Gal. I'm an only child of a single parent, and I married the oldest child of a family of six children.

That was an adjustment in and of itself. If I could describe my wife's family for you. Have you ever seen the kind of worms that they feed to fish, the kind of worms that are all just like this and they take them out and they put them in little cartons and they all worms like this? That's my in laws. Okay, here I am, and here they are, back and forth, all good. Great. Now, the way that worked was I can remember our first Thanksgiving. We were on campus here, but we were living in downtown L.A. Because both of us were working there. We were commuting from downtown out here, and Thanksgiving came. What are we going to do? Well, we solved the problem. We ate three meals, one for us, one with my family, one with her family. Christmas came. Now, some people some couples are fortunate in that they celebrate Christmas differently. Somebody opens gifts on Christmas Eve, and somebody opens gifts on Christmas morning. We weren't that fortunate. Everybody, on both sides of the families opens gifts on Christmas morning. And so we open gifts at one place, race to the other place and open gifts, race back and ate a dinner. Race back and ate another dinner, and at the end of the day, you're a candidate for an alcoholic ultra commercial.

One of the ways in which we tried, we were married for several years, in fact, we had had the God given opportunity to move 1500 miles away. By the way, one of the best pieces of advice when we got married by the pastor who married us, he says that there used to be an old tradition that said that whenever you get married, you should live at least a half days buggy ride away. And so we moved at least a half days buggy ride. And we went to Texas. And for five years we were there on our own by ourselves, and we worked things through. But then we drove back and took on the staff relationship at a Church in Southern California. You could almost feel it. You can almost sense the magnetism drawing as we kind of crested over their Cajon Pass coming out

of Barstow into Riverside, off the freeway. And we descended down and it was vacuuming us toward the... How do you do that? And one of the ways my mother in law, without ever thinking it through, she engineered this kind of glued infusion was that she made sure that even though her kids were grown and had children of their own.

If they had gifts for themselves, for each other, they had to mail them to her, and then she put them under her tree. If you want to get your presents, you had to go to her tree. So every holidays we went to Mother's place. And finally one day, one of us said, I forget who it was. It's probably me. I think what I would like is to have my gifts for this family or this family. We'll send them directly. Now then I had the opportunity to sit down and just briefly chat what that meant with my mother-in-law, that we are separate people, that we have the possibility of emotional closeness, of being physically present, but that we also have the freedom to make choices of our own and to have decisions. I recently had a conversation with a young man of college age, and he kind of swallowed and delightful guy. He said, Well, I've made the decision that I'm not going home this summer. I'm going to stay here and work. I'll take a vacation, but I'm going to stay here and work. And I just told my family and my mother's feelings are hurt.

That sense of, Must I go home? Must I, that obligation, the definition of differentiation is having the freedom and the possibility of person to person relationships and emotional closeness. You see very often the thing that causes us to be most dishonoring of parents, of fathers and mothers in our adult years is when the relationship is coercive and obligatory, rather than when it is a relationship in which there is freedom. Even our relationship with God has attached to it a great

deal of freedom. You can choose to be close or you can choose to be distant. That implicit in that relationship is the freedom to choose. So that's what differentiation means.

Now, I think that differentiation, secondly, is the natural result of a parenting process that follows a biblical norm. Turn with me, if you have your Bibles, turn with me to the book of Ephesians, chapter six, verse four. We'll talk for a second about what kind of families grow differentiated kids. Ephesians, chapter six. I'm sorry, verse four, it says, Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. I won't go into it here.

I think that there's a good case to be made for the translation of the living Bible that talks about it as parents, that this is a collective term. Do not provoke your children to anger. Bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. Now let's talk about those two words, discipline and instruction. Think that discipline or control is really a process that can distribute itself along a continuum. And in the center is this balance, control. We it is important, biblically, that parents discipline, control, that they prune, in a sense, their children's lives, that they take responsibility in one sense to begin to shape and to direct into mold that. At the extremes, however, is when families operate at either extreme of the discipline that I'm going to suggest in a moment that those extremes can provoke either disengagement or enmeshment, and that the second is the word instruction, a kind of a loving affirmation and support of a child. Discipline, control, instruction, support. You are affirmed as a person. And discipline that is balanced has the capacity of beginning with a lot of immediate kind of physical discipline and direct control, eventually relinquishing more and more of that control to the person, him or herself to eventually

that relationship, and by the time really by the time a young person in this culture, in this culture, by the time a young person is granted their driver's license effectively, our culture says that young person really has a great deal of control of their own life. They have the discipline.

And what happens in this culture there's a lot of families get in trouble because they really haven't helped their young people be self disciplined by the time they can drive that automobile and have the freedom to choose where they go and what they do. So the Biblical norm has to do with both discipline and instruction that is control and support. What kind of families grow disengaged in enmeshed children? I think there are families who operate at the extremes of both of those. Now what are the extremes for the Biblical norm of discipline? Let me suggest that the deviations from the biblical norm of discipline are, on the one hand, permissiveness and on the other hand, authoritarianism or punitiveness. Now let's go back with me just in your own minds to the story of the prodigal son. The prodigal son I think in one sense the term the prodigal son had he and his father, the prodigal son walks around and he is living in a permissive family, the prodigal son will say, I decided to just leave this place.

I'm bored. Well, whatever you want. How much money do you need? Well, I don't know. Give me all that you've got. Well, I'll have to go to the bank. Are you going to have enough now? I know that... Do you want to tell me where you're going? No, I got to tell you where I'm going, for crying out loud. You don't have any. Right. Well, I wasn't trying to do anything. There. That's fine. You just go and do wherever you want to go, whatever you want to do. That's great. I'm on my way. All right. Okay. Yes. Isn't it wonderful permissive; punitive.

You're going where? You don't step out of this room! If you're going... You see this? I may not look like it, fella, but I'll punch you out. You sit down. You shut up. Don't you dare take... I don't even thought. Not one word. I don't tell you why you don't leave. You don't leave. Because I tell you not to! Shut up. Don't breathe. Slash his tires. Let the air out, chain him to the bed. You don't move. Whatever you do. At the extremes, discipline that has no boundaries is never internalized. Permissiveness.

You never learn self-discipline unless there has been some kind of discipline from without. On the other hand, discipline that is not reasoned. One of the most marvelous verses in the Bible for me is in the book of James, where James talks about the wisdom that is from above. It's pure. And then he uses an interesting term. It is open to reason.

Phillips translates that characteristics as willing to listen, willing to be persuaded. It's interesting that you work with young people that the opposite of the authoritarianism is that you can maintain your own authority, but you're open to reason, willing to listen, willing to be persuaded. Balanced discipline, as opposed to the permissive and the punitive. On the other hand, deviations from balanced support, and love can create enmeshment or disengagement. At the extremes there are smothering and at the extremes there is neglect. Now the smothering parent, the smothering parent can be the kind of parent who says, kind of, you don't want to leave. You shouldn't leave. It would be so cool. Now come and just sit here beside me. Now what can I do? Now? Don't go. It is so far. Come and you can feel, all of a sudden, here, can I... I tell you what I've done. I baked your favorite cookies and I'll Bake them every night that you stay home, sit next to me. Be close.

I want to get out of here. Let's pray about it. Dear God, keep him here. Let him know that it's not good for him to be separate.

And all of sudden if anthropomorphically if God is in heaven. What is going on down there? The smothering kind of all of a sudden where you feel like your being there is needed in order for that parent somehow to be whole, that if you leave, they'll die. For crying out loud, that's upside down. Except that in one sense the parent-child relationship is to self destruct, that is, to work. The parents are to work themselves out of a job. And then all of a sudden for me to be older and growing, to feel that if I live, they'll die. That's the upside down. Smothering. Because eventually what happens in most cases, you smother... Out of here! And if you don't do that physically, you can do it emotionally, can't you? Let me go! Smothering. The other extreme is neglect. The neglectful parent would say this.

Hi. You've been gone? How long? That long? Did you know he was gone? Three years. Where did you go? Did you know I went there? How did you live? Well, do you have a good time? Listen, I've got to leave. I got a plane to catch. We could talk about it, but I've got a meeting to go with the Church, the mission board, whatever. Maybe we can get together. My calendar is pretty open for about three weeks from next Tuesday. If you're hurting, we'll talk about it. You see, most neglect, I'm convinced in religious families, families who are Christian in their commitments. Most neglect is not like the traditional neglect of the alcoholic who is so preoccupied with himself, or the corporate executive who works from six in the morning till nine at night. I'm convinced that most neglecting Christian families take place because family members have more to do at other places with other people. And in a sense, one of the

characteristics of neglect is the sense of jealousy the members of the family system have toward whatever that other organization, place, persons are. Jealousy. They are taking you away from me. Both smothering and neglect can provoke the same kind of response within the young person.

The response of disengagement or the response of enmeshment neglect is fine. You don't care about me, okay? I don't care about you. You're all preoccupied with yourself. Your life fine. I don't care about you. I'll be preoccupied with me. In that healthy sense, differentiation is the healthy sense of interdependence rather than dependence or independence. That you can choose to be responsible and you can choose to be a part of that family. Let me give you some characteristics or some strategies. Before I do that. Let me give you some characteristics of that differentiated person. I've defined the term. Let me give you some characteristics now, because now we begin to take kind of a thermometer a temperature.

Am I or am I not differentiated? Characteristics. First of all, that the differentiated person has become separate from their family of origin, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Let me talk to brief minute about that. When you are separate spiritually, you have not necessarily separated from your parents God. But whatever that relationship it is now belongs to you. And you are who you are in Christ, not because of them and dependent upon them, but you are who you are inside yourself because of the choices you are making.

Separate. Second characteristic that the differentiated person has formed personal and individual relationships with each member of their family of origin. Enmeshed families have an interesting

characteristic. They usually have somebody sitting at the switchboard in the middle through whom everybody goes to get to the other people. If you want to have a conversation with one of your siblings, with your brother, your sister, it never occurs to the enmeshed family that they could call them directly. Many times they talk to mother. Mothers very often sit at the switchboard. Oh, hello. Yes, just a second. There's somebody on the line for you. You don't mind if I listen in, do you? Okay, here it is. What? Is that true? Do you hear that? He wouldn't want to hear that. Goodbye.

You talk through. Communicate through two other people. Get a message for your father. Dear mom, when you see dad, tell him something for me. What's wrong? Does dad not have a name? Person to person relationships allow for the separateness to begin to form, and it takes a lot of that kind of emotional control. Thirdly, the differentiated person has the ability to enter and exit their family of origin with ease and comfort according to their own choice.

Enter and exit their family of origin with ease and comfort. There are some of us right now when we go home at Christmas vacation, the closer we get to home, the more uneasy we feel. I don't want to be here. I want to be skiing. What am I going home for? By the way, Ron said that probably since you were here this morning that you don't ski, the skiers are somewhere near Big Bear. Is that not true? Yeah. There was a kind of a line. They left early this morning at about six. And we understand you don't ski?

Commenter:

They don't ski yet.

Dennis Guernsey:

They don't ski yet. Well, they'll be rich someday anyway, because you got to be rich if you're going to ski a lot. All right. To enter and exit your family of origin with ease and with a degree of comfort. That when you do go home, it's comfortable. And the fourth characteristic of the differentiated person is that they're able to remain objective to their family and to the persons in their family. An objective means this. Now think for me, every family has a kind of craziness. I'm serious. We're all neurotics. You are. They are the kind of craziness.

Every family's got weirdos. Maybe you're the weirdo. That's okay. It's just that and every family has conflicts or a little bit of the rub is going on. The issue comes being objective to your family is that when you go home and you enter into that thing, do you get drawn right into the midst of the vortex of the conflict and the hassles to be there is to join in their craziness. If mom and dad are having a hassle to arrive home is suddenly to be in the midst of the hassle to enter the room is to become part of the fire. Being objective means you can be there and let those people be crazy on their own. They can have their own hassles. You can still relate to them as a separate person. And that means that you or dad may and your mother or somebody may be angry at somebody else at home. Lo and behold, you don't have to hassle that it's possible. Did you know that it's possible for you to have a relationship with your dad even though your brother's mad at him? That's true. Your mother may be desperately hurt by somebody else, but it doesn't have to affect your relationship with the other somebody.

Being able to be objective means that the relationships at your house are predicated upon you and the person individually, not necessarily upon all these kind of equations that are extraneous to that relationship. Now, let me give you a strategy with those characteristics in mind. By the

way, if you think through and we don't have time, think through. It's interesting that in the story of the prodigal son that the father has conversations and an individual relationship with his boys, that they're talking to each other, not about each other. The father is open, but he has also learned that there must be a sense of freedom. What is a strategy, perhaps, for dealing with one's own disengagement or enmeshment? Four suggestions. Number one, take personal responsibility and control of the relationships with others in your family of origin. I forever am hearing people say something like this. I don't have a relationship with my father. Why? He won't talk to me. He doesn't communicate with me. He won't take time with me. Oh, what are you doing to communicate with him? Well, I'm there. Well, how many letters have you written? But he's never written a letter to me.

Oh, how many calls have you made? How many times did you say, dad, I want to have lunch with you. I want to go for a drive. I don't know you, and I'm 45. You laugh. Recently, I was in touch with a family in which the wife decided that what she was going to do is she'd grown up and was almost into her 40s without a relationship of her own with her own father. She said, I'm going to take responsibility for that. I've been waiting passively for dad to get in touch with me. And so she called up, Hi. And mom was on the phone. Mom tended to be the switchboard. Hi, mom. Can I talk with dad? Oh, sure. What do you want me to tell him? No, let me talk with him. Dad comes up. Hi, dad. I wonder if I can get on your calendar and the two of us have lunch together. Something wrong? No, I just want to have lunch. Let me see, honey, she wants to have lunch with us! No, dad, I want to have lunch with you. Here comes the interesting thing. She's 40 years old. Her father's 60 plus.

Listen, you don't want Mommy alone? No, just... you and me? Yes. Okay. We've never done this, right! Okay. And I set the date. You listen and talk to the lady. She pulls up. She says, I'll pick you up. So she pulls up to the house, picks dad up. Dad walks out to the car, gets in the car, and as they drive away, mom standing out there. Interesting phenomenon. I asked this daughter, how many lunches have you had with mother in the past 20 years? She says, we get together two or three times a month. Do you always take dad? No. To take personal control and responsibility for the relationships at your house. Secondly, work at developing personal relationships and individual relationships with each member of your family of origin. The way you work out your own separateness is to relate to people as if you are separate. If you are an individual, frankly, there are some of you who don't have communication with other people in your family except through the switchboard. Some of you, if you let yourself go in the direction you go, will not grow up to honor your parents because there has been no track record in communication modeling going on.

Who in your family do you know the least? When's the last time you wrote a letter to somebody that they'll keel over in a dead faint? I got a letter from... Something's wrong. He wants money. But work at person to person relationships. When you go home on vacations, find a time and opportunity to get together eyeball to eyeball with the people who live there, who are around those environments and just talk to them about them and about you. Third strategy, don't gossip about the other people. One of the most destructive things in families in terms of enmeshments and disengagement is the gossip about people. Talking about other people's craziness. Do you know what's going on? They're having marital troubles. Are they really having marital problems? Yes. And I think it involves much more than that. Does it really involve much more? What is

involved? I don't know. But I can tell you that since he married that girl, I know it mom. He was that way. She should have... Now I know. Then.... Oh, welcome. How are you? It's good to see the two of you. And then you ever wondered if your family gossip with you about them?

What happens when you get in your car and drive away? There he goes. You know what he's doing? He's going down to Biola. Well, what's he going there for? What's he going to do? Well, he's probably doing very poorly in school. Yeah, he's always been kind of a retard, hasn't he.

Don't gossip the way you don't gossip. And the other side of that coin is the fourth characteristic. Don't take sides. Don't get triangled in. Don't talk about people. God intends for you. Biblically. It's consistent through scripture to talk to people, not about people. And don't take sides. Don't choose up good guys, bad guys. Don't get triangled in. Let's close with this illustration.

A family that I was working with again, a young woman with regards to her parents. Her parents forever were triangling her in as they had their own craziness between the two of them, mother and father having problems. She's grown. The woman's grown. She has children of her own. And she would call on the phone. Her mother would call her up and talk about dad. He's so cruel. He is so this and he is so that. And he does this and he does that.

The daughter used to think that if she could just let mother talk to her about dad, the mother would feel better. And so we were working this through. And finally I suggested this. Right? Look, you say to your mother, Mom, I'm not going to talk about dad anymore. I'll talk to you about you and I'll talk to you about me and I'll talk to you about us. I'm not going to talk about

dad anymore. Fact of the matter is, mom, whatever you tell me about dad, you need to know from this point on, I'm going to tell dad.

Then it happened. This is literally happening. Phone Rings Honey, this has just happened. Your father just did this and he is this and he has said she's been doing this and I can't stand it. I've been doing this. Mom, that's really bad. That's terrible. We'll see you, mom. Goodbye. Hi, mom. Can I talk to dad? Oh, no. Hi, dad. You need to know that I just had a conversation with mom and this is what she said. Thank you. Goodbye. Interesting thing. For the first time in a very long time, mom and dad talk to each other.

Don't take sides, don't gossip. Work it out with everybody there as persons. When God gives you family and when we grow up, when we get older and have family of our own, the way you honor those people is to have work through those own emotional contaminants that are inside you so that you can let them have their own craziness. You can let them have their own weakness, you can let them have their own inadequacies. But yet you can still know that they did the best they could do. You've got a relationship with them that has value in of itself. They don't stand between you and anyone else and you can feel good about them. Where do you stand? The continuum of disengagement and enmeshment. But somewhere in the middle is that process of differentiation. Know this is a fact. For many of us, differentiation is years of work. It's not something you say. Well, I go home at Easter. I've got a week to get differentiated. No. If you made the decision that you wanted to try and work it through and have that kind of relationship in which people love each other, you at least love them, and that you have relationships with people as individuals that may well take years, but there's a time to begin.

Where do you stand? Disengaged? Separate? Unplugged? Alienated? Distant? Enmeshed? Smothered? Able to be yourself and let them be themselves so that you can love them as they are? Let's pray. Father, we do honor you because you have given us the freedom, incredible freedom to be differentiated. Though you created us, you have never smothered us nor neglected us. Though you have seen our erring and sinful ways, you are never permissive, nor are you punitive that you are the absolute perfect model of what it is to both discipline and to love. Father, for those of us who carry about inside us struggles in terms of our relationships, I pray that you might give us both a boldness to believe that your Grace is sufficient that you never establish a pattern you never make a demand for which you do not give us the Grace to fulfill. We do thank you for yourself we thank you for your work we thank you for your energy the animation of your word in our lives and we pray in Jesus marvelous name Amen.