

How the Church can Prepare Men to Be Family Shepherds

Scott Brown

This article is a reproduction of an address given at the "Uniting Church and Home" conference, St. Louis Missouri, August 29, 2002

This is an exciting subject because everywhere I go, I find men hungry for a roadmap for what it means to be a man.

The thoughts I will deliver today were birthed over thirty years ago as my father began gathering our young family around the Bible in our home. He broke with family tradition and took us out of a liberal Methodist church to Calvary Church in Placentia, California. Calvary, under the leadership of John F. Tebay, a Bible teaching, family strengthening church.

My earliest memories of spiritual life surround an image of our fledgling family reading the Bible in a home with a few other believers, and taking notes in church as John preached. My father was the instigator. The result was that everyone in our family, one by one, came to love and trust Christ.

My dad was a school teacher, a ping pong player and a writer. He was wise and good. But he was also a village strafing, napalm dropping WWII fighter pilot. He is my hero. He helped rescue the world from Adolph Hitler and Hirohito during WWII, and then came home and then rescued our family from everlasting destruction by bringing the teaching of scripture and the knowledge of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ into our home in my early teen years.

This was during the 1960's and 70's when the sexual revolution, the drug culture, the Vietnam War, and the Counter Culture were raging. But, a quiet movement was also gathering at Calvary Church Placentia. It was led by John Tebay, the pastor of the church, and several of his men, including my wife's father. He had a message that was truly counter culture and it changed the lives of many young men and women. The core messages for families were: the supremacy of scripture, the sovereignty of God, the destructiveness of evil, the importance of the family as the basic building block of society, Biblical submission and authority in marriage, the centrality of the church as God's vehicle for healing and salvation by grace alone.

I remember the mantra quite well: "If you succeed in business but fail with your family, you have failed". I heard this from John Tebay over and over again.

John Tebay, Phil Lewis, the late Mel Friesen (of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship) were key leaders. As I look back on those days, I realize that these men were radicals in their time. Since then, I have not yet seen a church achieve the effectiveness in the area of father equipping and family strengthening that I saw there.

Calvary Church never grew to be very large, but it served to equip and send out men to be men, and women to be women. John always had a small group of families that he was training. He is still doing it today. Throughout his life, he has had an unbroken passion for equipping families.

I feel very often how happy I am that I was allowed to know him and be under his ministry at such a critical time in my life.

John taught me God's Word, one on one, - personally - from the moment of my salvation. Immediately after my conversion, he gave me books on all matters of the faith including ecclesiology, the sovereignty of God and discipleship. I have many faded and worn books, still in my library, that John either gave me or recommended even as a teenager.

One of the books he gave me was Robert Coleman's *The Master Plan of Evangelism* where Coleman observes that Jesus staked his whole ministry on 12 men. His discipleship method was concentrated. It was small. It was unadorned. John demonstrated the ministry of Jesus that Coleman described.

And then he walked beside me showing me what it meant to be a leader, husband and father. This happened through an array of family integrated Bible studies, home groups, mission trips, retreats. There were Sunday schools and youth groups, but much of the church program was family integrated.

He was an equipper of men and trainer of fathers. At his feet I was inspired to love the Lord and to love the church – loves which have never waned. Outside of my father, John Tebay is the first name that always comes to mind when I hear the question: "who influenced you the most"?

He even gave me my first "DayTimer" schedule book at age 18 to help me organize my efforts. At age 48, I still use it today, except that I now keep an electronic Handspring Visor tucked in it.

John was a personal trainer of fathers as well as a leader of single men, believing that ministry to men should be the focus of church ministry. I remember hearing him say many times: "win the father, win the family; win the family, win the church; win the church and win the world. The themes of his ministry ring in my ears to this day.

This early experience at Calvary Church illustrated for me the great importance of churches playing the role of equipping men to be family shepherds.

In contrast to my early experience as a Christian, the modern church has almost completely ignored God's delivery system for truth. Fathers have been cut out of the deal in local church structure and life and their role has been given to Sunday school teachers, women and paid staff. Church structure, driven by pragmatism, has grown and its tentacles has choked and paralyzed the role of fathers.

Fortunately, there are a growing number of leaders in the church today who believe that the churches need to be restructured to facilitate the Biblical order in the church and the home.

My subject today is, How the Church Can Prepare Men to be Family Shepherds. My job in this session is to speak of practical, nuts and bolts methods of equipping. Following are four guidelines from Psalm 78 and eight practical methods.

But first, it is important to give a brief definition or character profile of a family shepherd. What does a family shepherd look like? He is at least three things:

- * Godly Man – He fills his heart with the things of God.
- * Covenant Husband – He loves his wife as Christ loves the church with sacrificial service.
- * Biblical Theologian – He feeds his flock the very best food.

I. Four Guidelines from Psalm 78

Psalm 78 is one of the great historical psalms. It begins with a charge to fathers (v1-8) and for the rest of the Psalm, David recounts the history of Israel and draws lessons from it.

The Psalm defines several activities of manhood that are of critical importance. They are elements which have nearly been lost in our modern churches.

1. Lay The Right Foundation: The Word of God, v1-3

V1 Give ear, O my people, to my law' Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

V2 I will open my mouth in a parable' I will utter dark sayings of old.

V3 Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us.

This is a picture of men with their ears inclined in a direction. There are two things toward which his ears are inclined:

- * "my law" and
- * "the words of my mouth"

This is a picture of men who are interested in learning from the past. These are represented in v2 as "dark sayings of old", and in v2 " a Parable", which means, story from the past.

Leaders need to create conditions for their men to become experts in the great stories of the Bible. There is a body of truth to be passed down.

What process does he need to engage in to be able to do this?

We must order our churches to get the ears of our men inclined toward the Word of God.

There is a dangerous booby trap, in the pathway of our kinds of churches which place a high value on the family. The danger is that our ears would be inclined mainly toward the family.

When we started Trinity Baptist Church, some people came expecting to hear one sermon after another on the family. Some people were disappointed. What they experienced were sermons from the Bible, and when the Bible addressed family, we preached on family. At first, this was very unsatisfying to a few of our people. But, we were convinced that they would be most satisfied with the wider teachings of scripture instead of a particular focus. Now, these same people have come to me to express how satisfied they are in the Word, and how it is reviving them.

In many of our churches there is a famine of the Bible.

John Piper in a sermon on Psalm 78 said:

"It means that the Bible will be the sun and solar system of all that we teach our children. It will not be one among many books. It will be the central book, the all-permeating Book. The other books are dark planets; the Bible is the light-giving sun. All other books will be read in the light of this book. All books will be judged by this book. All books will find meaning in the world view built by this book. Which means that this book must be known first and known better than all the other books."

So one of the great principles of this subject is that to prepare men to be family shepherds, priority needs to be given to the Word of God.

For shepherding to occur, leaders need to focus men on the word in such a way that they love the Bible, obey the Bible and read the Bible to their families. The Bible should be the first and foremost book in our churches and in the homes of your men.

I believe that the best way to do this in the churches is through expository preaching.

I believe that if we get this one right, much of what we do will be right. So, what is expository preaching and why do we do it?

1. What do we mean by expository preaching?

Expository preaching at Trinity will have the following characteristics:

1. Preaching through entire books of the Bible.
2. Using the context of the passage to shape it's interpretation.

3. Moving line-by-line and principle-by-principle through the logical sequence of a passage.
4. Bringing out the meanings of the words, to the best of our ability, from the original Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic meanings.
5. Using the theological ideas in the text and correlating them to the broader sweep of theology throughout the scriptures.
6. Cultivating a love for hearing the Word of God

I appreciate the faithful adherence to these principles that John Calvin's life illustrates. John Piper documents this in his book, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*. Throughout Calvin's preaching ministry, there were fewer than 6 instances where he broke the pattern of working through the context of a book of scripture.

On Easter 1538 Calvin was banished from Geneva for his preaching and went to Strasbourg for three years. Conditions changed and the city fathers invited Calvin back to Geneva. So in Sept 1541 he walks into pulpit and picks up at the next verse from where he stopped when banished. He comments that he wanted them to know that his time in Strasbourg was just an interlude in his preaching through the text.

Why that kind of preaching? Luther did not do it. Spurgeon did not do it. Why did Calvin maintain this radical adherence to expository preaching? There are at least three reasons:

1. Calvin believed the lamp of the Word had gone out in Europe.
2. T.H.L. Parker writes that Calvin had a horror of those who preached their own ideas in the pulpit. "When we enter the pulpit it is not that we bring our best dreams and fancies"
3. He believed that when the Word was faithfully expounded, God Himself stood forth in the congregation.

Perhaps we may not maintain the radical consistency that Calvin demonstrated, but we appreciate the example and take it as a challenge to consistently bring God's Word, in its context, to the church as our normal practice.

Why are we so committed to expository preaching – Three reasons

First, expository preaching forces us to take the direct messages of the passage instead of leaning toward our personal passions and preferred subjects. We avoid a topical approach because we think it gives too much license for our own opinions and personal inclinations. We believe that an expositional approach to our preaching will give a fuller, more balanced picture of the "whole counsel of God".

Second, We believe that this approach will provide greater leverage in training our children and ourselves in the ways of God's kingdom. We believe it will provide them with a strong and broad foundation.

Third, a steady diet of topical preaching will most probably, after many years, leave the

preacher not knowing much more than when he started. Because he often creates the message content with a reliance on his own inclinations, he is not as often stirred up and taken in directions that are counter-intuitive for him.

How does this method assist the participation of fathers?

Expository teaching is not an end in itself. We trust that the heads of households will vigorously study the passages we are preaching on and teach them daily to their families. We hope that our preaching will be but a springboard to deeper daily study and education in the whole counsel of God in all of the households of Trinity Baptist Church. Here are some references that are helpful resources on the subject: Deut 6:4-9; Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:1-12; Matt 4:4; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 3:14-4:5; Titus 1:3, 9; Heb 4:12; 1 Peter 1:22-2:3.

Here are some of the things we are doing at Trinity Baptist Church to help men become lovers and expositors of the Word of God.

- * We preach expositionally
- * We send out a weekly email of songs and scripture
- * We provide sermon outlines that kids can use during the services
- * We conduct Thursday Morning Men's Bible Study which gives men an opportunity to study the passage we are preaching on and to discuss and ask questions.
- * Boys Day at Southeastern. We take our boys to Southeastern Seminary chapel to teach them the rules of hermeneutics and techniques of preaching.

If a church is to prepare men to be family shepherds, then they need to have a big focus on the Bible.

2. Engage Men in The Right Activity: Teaching their children, v4-8

Church people of our day are in a flurry of activity. There is a giant sucking sound of resources into our churches to keep the gears cranking. But what kind of activity are we supposed to be having.

Leaders have a responsibility to paint the target, and say "put your energy here".

The target for our energy that Psalm 78 paints is: teach our children.

Church leaders need to learn how to refocus the energies of men on teaching. Almost everything around us frustrates this effort.

Note the gravity and importance: V5 "He appointed a law in Israel" – to do what? For fathers to teach their children.

We need to turn the energies of men and help them become Dispensers not depositories of truth. Men hide the truth as they passively take it all in and never communicate it to others. When a man does this he becomes a depository instead of dispenser.

Our Heads may be filled with the right facts about God, but we don't communicate them.

Men are naturally self indulgent instead of sacrificial. However, men were built by God to be givers of life. Psalm 78 illustrates one of the ways a man becomes a giver of life. He is a giver of the Word of Life.

V4 We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

V5 For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel. Which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children

v6 That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children,

v7 That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments

v8 "And may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.

V9 The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.

V10 they did not keep the covenant of God' They refused to walk in His law,

V11 And forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them

There are three generations mentioned in this passage:

The Father

The Son

The generation yet unborn

A faithful father not only teaches his offspring, but he also has his eye on children yet to be born. This means that he is training a trainer. He is training another leader. To do this his student must be sharpening some key skills: the ability to communicate ideas clearly; the ability to plan and set goals; the ability to execute a plan; the internal posture of a servant (as opposed to someone who is seeking his own entertainment).

Get them leading early and give them a vision and a context for leadership of younger children. This means that it is important to teach a child to plan and train and communicate.

But men have a Problem. There are so many things competing for his time.

In our culture, men seem to have time for everything else but what is called for in Ps 78. Their Pursuits, Priorities, Passivity and idolatries have eclipsed their fatherhood role.

Remedy: Refocus the energy of men in your church. Church leaders desperately need to lead the charge in their churches to shift energy away from some of the commonly accepted things in the culture and toward the things that God has commanded. We need

an energy shift.

For years, Dennis Rainey of Campus Crusade for Christ's Family Life Ministries, held Bible studies with businessmen. He became convicted that he was not teaching his own wife and children. So he quit teaching the Bible study with businessmen for 10 years because he decided he should not do it unless he was doing it in his home first.

Accept the fact that your role as a trainer of trainers will cut you out of many things going on in the culture. Accept the fact that the world will constantly attempt to lure you away from your creation order mantle. Accept that you will sometimes be thought of as on the fringe.

If a man is spending time preparing for Bible studies, or Sunday school classes or mentoring another person and is not doing these things for his own family, you should encourage him to stop doing these things and begin doing them for his family. After he succeeds in shepherding his own household in the Word, then he will be ready to do it for others.

Encourage men to remove items from their schedules that are of lesser importance to their primary calling.

Encourage men to heed the call of the song:

'Rise up on men of God
Have done with lesser things".

I once heard someone say to a group of men, "The problem is not prioritizing your schedule, it is scheduling your priorities". The problem is not usually lack of time, but time spent in occupations of little importance.

Charles Spurgeon describes beautifully the man who invests his time in teaching his children:

"Around the fireside fathers should repeat not only the Bible records, but the deeds of the martyrs and reformers, and moreover the dealings of the Lord with themselves both in providence and grace. ...What happy hours and pleasant evenings have children had at their parents knees as they have listened to some "sweet story of old."
Spurgeon, Treasury of David, p331

This beautiful picture is a difficult one to paint. Almost every force around you is pulling you away from it.

3. Show Men How to Deliver The Right Message: V4: What will we teach them?

V4 Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

This has to do with the backdrop of our messages to men. A man's message must be wrapped in the following three messages:

A. Praises of the Lord

This describes men with their joy in the Lord, delight in the Lord. These men are not just filled with head knowledge only. On the contrary, they walk around with a song in their hearts. The joy of the Lord is their strength.

B. His Strength

This describes valiant men who understand the power of God. They are never afraid of man because of God's power.

We have a question in the Brown home: Whom do the Browns fear? The Browns fear no man. The Brown's fear God.

The man who has the strength of God on his mind is not self confident, but confident in God. He has not placed his hope in the world, but in God.

He is a powerful man who believes Ps 73:26

"God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever".

C. His Wonderful works

This describes a man who knows the details of how God has worked. This is why it is critical that men lead their children to memorize scripture. If they do not know the facts of God's wonderful works, they will not know very well how to address the difficulties they are facing.

As we equip men to be family shepherds, we need to help men pump out the joy.

4. Help Men Recognize The Right Results: What would be the observable results of following Ps 78? The Psalm presents four results that will be observable in our children.

a. They may set their hope in God, v7

How fragile they will be if they put their hope in anything else in this world. These children are so confident in God that they are characterized by hope.

The goal of a father's teaching is that the student is filled with confidence in God.

b. They would not forget the works of God, v7

Memory of them would come back to them in times of need. They will remember the meanings of the lives of Noah, Moses, Joseph and Job, and it will have an impact on their behavior. Remembrance, and knowledge are important elements in measuring our

success in teaching.

"that they might know them"

c. They would keep His commandments, v7

"in keeping them there is great reward' Ps 19 we see a picture of a person who is refreshed and sanctified by God's commands.

This is not legalistic outward obedience, but internally motivated obedience in whatever they are doing and wherever they are.

d. They would break the pattern established by their fathers, v8

v8 And may not be like our fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God

Fathers forgot. The plea is for fathers to break the cycle of rebellion against God.

To sum up this thought. It is clear that when we peer into the souls of our children, we need to see confidence in God. We are training fearless warriors.

When your children don't know where their next meal is coming from, or experience a job loss or a market crash, they think of the manna in the wilderness, God fed them with the 'food of angels'.

When they are in danger – with no way out, they think of the Red Sea and the words that were uttered there: "The Lord will fight for you".

When they are tempted to complain because life is hard, they think of how God provided water out of nowhere, and how the complaining children of Israel provoked God's wrath and many died.

When they are surrounded by people going the wrong direction, as they did in the wilderness, they remember the wandering and the judgment and the sorrow that comes from departing from God.

We can know if we have been good shepherds, when we see that our children are fearless, obedient and happy.

Let me sum up the four ways the church can prepare men to be family shepherds:

1. Lay The Right Foundation: The Word of God, v1

2. Engage Men in The Right Activity: Teaching their children, v4-8

3. Show Men How to Deliver The Right Message: Praise, V4

4. Help Men Recognize The Right Results: Confidence in God, 7-8

Now, let's turn to eight practical methods for how the church can prepare men to be family shepherds.

II. Eight Practical Methods

1. Choose Church leaders from men who manage their households well.

Look for character qualities above technical capabilities.

This has nearly been abandoned in modern church life. We seek technical abilities rather than spiritual qualities, verified by family leadership. I Timothy 3:4-5. Church leadership is manly business engaged with men who have particular qualities.

2. Trust in the simple instructions and examples of the Apostles:

Ministry to men:

The apostles have detailed a simple yet effective method for making disciples. Men are taught the Word by three methods:

First, Men are to be taught by the Word as they personally "long for the pure milk of the Word" (1 Pet. 2:2). Like the Bereans, they search the scriptures to discern truth (Acts 17:11).

Second, they are to be taught by qualified elders who "preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2). The primary task of elders/pastors/bishops/shepherds (all these terms are synonyms in the New Testament) is to bring the ministry of the Word to the men of the church. Titus 1:9.

Third, they teach one another in the context of church meetings. The flagship passage of scripture for this activity is

I Cor 14:26-33:

"whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation.. Let all things be done for edification'.

Here, the church is edified by the men of the church as they articulate truth as it related to their particular situations.

So, the ways that men are equipped are fairly simple. They study the Word on their own, and they find those pastors who "preach the Word in season and out of season," and they are taught via the instruction of godly men as they bring the Word into the church

meeting.

These men are charged to teach women and children. My opinion is that in our culture it is easier to teach children than women. Perhaps the most neglected method of teaching the women in our churches is husbands teaching their wives. In our egalitarian, feminist culture, there are only a few women who would open themselves to this, and their husbands are terrified to do it for fear of the reaction. But, God has been abundantly clear that the order and authority in the church flows from men to their families - men who have been taught by the Word and by the godly men in the church are now ready to teach their own wives and children. They have something to say, and they say it.

3. Be willing to send your men through the pain of leadership in their homes.

Resist the easy road, and expose men to the tougher tasks. Men prefer to sit in meetings in rows like cabbage heads in fields. They would rather avoid going through the much more arduous task of thinking, cultivating, creating, and doing the ministry in their own homes and neighborhoods.

Church leaders: it is the easy road to create and participate in church meetings, committees, programs than it is to train up children. We take the easier road and we abdicate our primary responsibility. Why? Because it;

- * Is more comfortable for us
- * Pleases the pastor and church leaders
- * We think we get spiritual points for it from peers and pastors
- * We get praise for it

I asked one of the men in our church what he thought I should say to you on this subject. He was quick to say "tell them remove the safety net. If you remove it, and you encourage them, they will fill the gap". What he meant was, that the church has become like the welfare state where the state does everything for you and you quit doing what you are supposed to do.

Sunday Schools ARE Part of the Problem

Until the last year and a half, I have always been in churches where Sunday School was the normal fare for training of children. I have been a Sunday School teacher from adult to toddler, and I am thankful for the relationships built and sweetness that I experienced in those roles. There was fruit. It was a blessing.

But something was obvious in all of these churches. The men (and I always have made it a practice to know the men) did very little personal instruction of their children. And, even when the Sunday school teacher tried to get the parents involved, it never worked.

This is normal in our churches, but we need to realize that this condition causes a heinous crime to be committed against God's order for the church and the family. God never

intended for children to be trained by Sunday school teachers. He specifically gave this responsibility to fathers.

The scriptures are perfectly clear: children should be trained in spiritual matters by their fathers. The father is the delivery system of the news of kingdom of God and when you bypass him, you kill the messenger. And without a preacher, how will they hear?

4. Establish church structure that facilitates Deuteronomy chapter six as a priority. The passage is perfectly clear. A father is to take personal responsibility for the training of his children. The church tends to keep men so busy with work outside the home that they have no encouragement or time to read the Bible, pray or evangelize.

Determine the trans-generational value of your programs.

While the rest of the church exerts enormous energy for cantatas, plays, Sunday school programs, youth ministries, parties... what will you do? Where will you spend your time?

I submit that a father who spends his time praying and reading and studying for his children will be more effective than the father who organizes a cantata, teaches a Sunday school class or sits on a board.

5. Develop a system for accountability

Richard Baxter is the quintessential example of achievement in this area. We do not have this one figured out yet in our church.

6. Don't operate and create programs where men are not leading.

Research shows that the church is typically run by women. They bear most of the responsibility for the activity in the church. They are 100% more likely to be involved in discipleship, 56% more likely to hold a leadership position in the church, 29% more likely to read the Bible, 29% more likely to share their faith, 46% more likely to disciple others. (Barna Research Update, March 6, 2000). Change the current reality by reviewing or even shutting down ministries which do not have a male leader.

7. Exhort your men hard, to Practice the three R's in your home

We want them to do three things;

1. Read Bible daily in your home.

Daily deposit filling the well. Rome was not conquered in a day and it takes a lifetime of days to fill the well with the sweet water of life:

2. Write out training plan: Fathers: put your training plan in writing

3. Revamp time allocation

8. Transform the conventional household

We need to restore the role of the household that we see in the ministry of Jesus and the expansion of the early church. As Michael Green has said, "One of the most important methods of spreading the gospel in antiquity was by the use of homes". (Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, p223)

The home in the New Testament was the center of spiritual activity. Even a casual reading of the New Testament reveals that the home was a haven for prayer, healing, Biblical teaching, breaking of bread, hospitality, and ministry to the sick and happy genuine relationships.

In the gospels, we constantly see Jesus ministering in homes.

Do a study of the word "house" or "household" is used. In almost all of the cases in the following list, the idea of a person's network is not the context but the actual events taking place in a physical house or a specific family unit.

Acts 2:46 They broke bread together from house to house and ate together with glad and sincere hearts praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added daily to their number those who were being saved.

The term "hospitality" is key in understanding how to use your home as a center of evangelism. Romans 12:13, I Peter 4:9, Hebrews 13:1-2, I Timothy 3:2, I Timothy 5:10.

In the early church the work of evangelism and equipping was regularly staged in a home. The home was the cradle of the church.

We are in wartime.

Most of the men I know believe we have experienced a catastrophic collapse of the Biblical order in the church and the home, and that desperate measures are needed for these desperate times.

Charles Colson in his address to Focus on The Family's 25 year anniversary said:

"If you look at America, the family is the front lines of battle. It is the single most important battle of our times. It is where we need to make our stand to preserve society"

Dennis Rainey says it this way:

"The family is God's smallest unit in the battle for the soul of any nation. He designed the family as the birthplace and residence of Christianity. It is the place where the knowledge, fear and love of the Lord are taught by parents and learned by children"... If the soul of America is to be restored, it will be done one home, one family at a time, and in the church we assist that by proclaiming God's truth for the family. We need a "family reformation." Just as the Protestant Reformation restored vibrant faith to the soul, so a

family reformation can restore spiritual vitality in our homes, communities, and nation".
Dennis Rainey, Building Strong Families, p16-17

In World War II, my father was involved in the battle for Iwo Jima. As the island was secured, he flew P51 mustang fighter planes on raids to mainland Japan. Iwo Jima was the bloodiest Marine battle in military history. On that small, two mile wide by five mile long island, The United States Marine Corps took a hellish beating and for it they received more medals of honor than any other group in military history.

The Japanese were dug into a vast sixteen mile matrix of tunnels going down three levels and had hollowed out the inside of Mt. Suribachi into a honeycomb like killing machine of bunkers and artillery positions.

Thousands of marines were slaughtered under an unrelenting hail of enfilade fire from which there was no cover or protection.

My father was there, first, in a foxhole for two weeks, and then, after the airfields were secured, as an Army Air Corps P51 Mustang pilot who protected B29's on bombing raids on mainland Japan, bombed Japanese targets, strafed villages and dropped Napalm on enemy cities.

Two weeks ago my father and I sat down with a Raleigh businessman, Bill Henderson. Bill is 80 years old, and still going to work in his real estate development company every day. Bill led one of the Marine divisions on D day on Iwo and lived to finish the battle and secure the island thirtysix days later. On the morning of D Day, Bill started with 1175 men. By the end of the day, he had 75 men.

Admiral Nimitz, who was the commander of the Pacific theatre of the war remarked, that with these men,

"uncommon valor
was a common virtue"

We live in times that are begging for men of uncommon valor.

For our purposes today the uncommon valor is taking the mantle of shepherd.

To be a shepherd is a call to self sacrifice.

Equipping men to be family shepherds, is a call to self-sacrifice.

We are calling men to abandon their own plans and the plans our Christian culture has engraved on the landscape of our churches. We are calling for men to return to the Biblical order that the apostles prescribed for the church.

We are asking men too do something for someone else – for God's glory for the coming

generations.

Men have abandoned their God given roles as leaders of their homes and churches and teachers of their children, and the fatherless go uncared for.

There is a new generation of men who are rising up. They are going back to the Bible for their roadmap. They are becoming teachers of the next generation. Many of you are here.

Let me close with what Bill Henderson writes about the last day of the Battle for Iwo Jima:

"Finally, on March 26 we secured the island and they gave us orders to pick up our gear and that we were going to be evacuated and taken back to our base camp. As we did, we struggled down the road. We were a rag tag bunch, and a miserable looking outfit.

No other outfit ever seen combat for 37 days of intense direct conflict. In other long battles, the conflict would go on for a few days and then back off, but not on Iwo Jima. No other outfit was involved in this kind of combat for 37 days. No one had shaven for six weeks. Of course I was crusted with sweat and rain and volcanic ash dried on. We were a crummy looking outfit. Our eyes were sunken out from lack of sleep. They were blurred from the horrors we had seen. As we marched down the beach, we detoured around to go by the Fifth Marine Division's cemetery. At first we were stumbling along, but as we got closer, and closer to the cemetery I noticed something happening. The men started to march. They formed themselves up in order, and instead of stumbling on, they were marching. Those who were limping no longer were limping. When we got to the cemetery, everyone was standing ramrod straight. There was not one limping. Something had happened to them. There was a sense of awe and reverence. As I left I saw an epitaph which was written on an ammunition carton. It is engraved on my mind. It read:

"When you go home, tell them for us and say,
for your tomorrow, we gave our today."

We stumbled off the beach and got on the boats. As we started to get on the boats, we had no docks. We had to go out in the small boats, but the ocean was surging up and down. When we got out there, we were too weak to climb up the sides. The sailors (you must remember that there is always a fight between the sailors and the Marine Corps). These sailors held us in their arms and carried us aboard.

To give you the magnitude of it, when my battalion landed on February 18, we had a total of 1688 men. When we came off the island, we had 86 men who were not killed in action or wounded. It took 22 ships to bring our division to Iwo Jima, it only took eight to take them home."

Because we secured Iwo Jima, we waged a successful bombardment of Japan which led to her downfall.

But there was more. Just being there saved the lives of over 24,000 Army Air Corps Pilots and crewmen who were returning from battle with damaged airplanes, who would have plunged into the ocean if Iwo Jima was not secured by the United States Marines.

We are in a war. For me, the battle for Iwo Jima, is a parable for the battle for the family of our times. We must rise up. We must risk our lives. We must redirect our energy. We must use our time differently. We must use our money differently.

Our prayer is that "uncommon valor would become a common virtue"

Our prayer is that you will "give your today, for the tomorrow of the next generation

"Rise up O men of God, have done with lesser things"

Let me close with a final quotation from one of the dark times in the history of God's people. Please let it be a warning, a challenge and an encouragement.

Judges 5:1-2

Then Deborah and Barak
the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:
When leaders lead in Israel,
When the people willingly offer themselves,
Bless the Lord!