



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor  
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## STARTING THE 4/14 FAMILY CHALLENGE

### 90-DAY ADVENTURE

Joshua: Obtaining Victory in the Christian Life  
*Joshua 4*

Please turn in your Bibles with me to Joshua 4. This is a story teaching the Israelites how to pass the faith on to their kids. I'm going to teach from Joshua 4, but I'm also going to take you back to Deuteronomy 6 because the book of Deuteronomy comes before Joshua.

Deuteronomy is really the instruction to all the people of how to rededicate themselves to the Lord, to get ready for what's going to happen in the book of Joshua. Moses is speaking to all of the people in the book of Deuteronomy and then Joshua is leading the people into the Promised Land. Moses is telling them how they can be successful; Joshua is going to lead them through that process.

What we read about today in Joshua 4 is really the application of something that Moses taught in Deuteronomy. So we'll start in our passage today, Joshua 4, but we'll reflect back on Deuteronomy to see what God had been telling Moses to help them know how to be successful.

Let's look at Joshua 4 first. Verse 1: *When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe. Now the whole nation of Israel, over a million people, needed to cross over the Jordan River because it was flowing at flood stage, the Bible tells us, and that was the barrier preventing them from entering into the Promised Land. The promise is the blessings that God had for them. Their job was to cross over in obedience to God.*

It's amazing in this particular story, though, of how the order takes place. Because I think sometimes we say to God, "God, do a miracle and then I'll obey." In this particular story what they did was God says, "I want the leaders, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant to go and get into the water. When they get into the water I'll stop the water up." In other words what God is saying is you obey and then I'll do the miracle. I think sometimes we must take a risk to obey the Lord before the miracle takes place in our lives. That's what God is doing here in this passage.

He tells them after they'd all crossed over the Jordan, verse 2, *"Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight."*

They had to pick twelve guys who were going to pick up a stone. I'm sure these guys were heavy looking guys. They said, "Hey, we'll pick you. You'll represent our tribe. Go and get some big rock down there by the Jordan where the priests are standing, put it on your shoulder, and take it up here." Take it down to *the place where you stay tonight*.

Verse 4: *So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you."*

I looked up that word *sign* in several different versions and every version I looked it up in it says 'sign.' You want to know what it means? It means sign. It's like a signpost. You're going to set this pile of stones up as a sign. What kind of sign was it? Was it a Yield sign, a Do Not Enter sign? I don't think so. Stop sign? Maybe. "Stop and think" is the idea. This is a thinking monument. This is something you go and you see and you say, "Wow. What does that mean?"

Just a pile of rocks is all it is, but a very important sign, it says in verse 6, *to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.* They're a memorial, a pile of stones that are a memorial to remember what happened in this moment when the Israelites were on one side, facing a boundary that they could not cross, a river that seemed uncrossable, but God stopped up the water miles ahead so that there was dry ground for a million people to cross over. Wow. What a miracle. "Tell your kids about it!" they're saying here. When you see the pile of stones, tell them all about it.

*So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the Lord had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down. Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day.* In other words, they're still standing at the time of the writing of this book of the Bible.

In this passage God is teaching the Israelites how to share their faith, how to pass their faith on particularly to the next generation. He wants the children to grow up to experience God's power. He wants the children to understand how to apply God's grace in their lives. He wants the children to understand that God is powerful.

So when you see the stones, tell them the beautiful story of what happened here. The monument has a spiritual purpose; to mark the spiritual milestone, to mark the spiritual monument of something very significant that happened in their lives that demonstrated the power of God.

I wonder what your spiritual milestones are. What spiritual monuments you have from your past that God has done some great things that are the reminders of you of God's power, the reminders of you of God's grace.

I've given you a handout. Pull this one out that has the twelve stones on it to be used by you to identify some of those special things that God has done in your life that demonstrate His power and grace. You can write on the stones what God has done in your life and use that as a reminder to yourself of "Wow. God is powerful, God is gracious." But it also becomes something that you can share with others because the stones become the foundation for passing the faith on to other people. That's the power that's represented in this monument. Think about some of the stones that you have in your life.

This week I had dinner with Jim and Lynn Trombitas. They came over to our home and they were telling us about how they met, which must have been a significant spiritual milestone because they weren't Christians when they met. Their bosses introduced them to each other and they had some kind of party going on. They were at the party and they talked that evening. One of the things they talked about was spiritual things. They weren't even Christians yet! They talked about wanting to get back into church.

Well it so happened then that Lynn started attending a church, got involved in this church, and got to know Jesus. Wow. What an exciting thing. So she tells Jim, "I can't be with you anymore because I'm a Christian and you're not. We're unequally yoked." Now I'm sure that's a significant stone here for Jim because Jim, as a result of all that and the things that were going on, decided to accept Jesus Christ in his life too. The two of them then got married and all the rest is history. But I'm sure that's a monument stone for them.

What are the stones in your life? Where has God demonstrated His power? How has He demonstrated the good things about who He is? You can take those stones because I think we tend to forget and I think God wants us to remember and that's why He created this monument. Don't forget the power of God. It's very easy to forget, but God does great things in our lives and those stones become opportunities for us to remind ourselves.

But the stones, once you fill this out, aren't just for you; they're for you to pass on to others. Maybe you post this on the wall somewhere in your house. Maybe you post this at work. People are going to say, "What's that?" Just like in the Bible. They're going to say, "What's with this thing with the stones on it?" giving you the opportunity to share your faith, to tell people about the power and the grace of God. You see why we have these monument stones? A piece of paper like this hanging up. Or maybe you would even take rocks and write on them and stack them up on your desk. People are going, "What is this?" Let me tell you about the power and the grace of God. What a powerful way to share what God wants to do in people's lives. This monument isn't just for them; it's for them to use to share their faith with other people.

What's surprising to me is how similar the people of Moses' time in Deuteronomy or Joshua's time here in Joshua 4 are to us in the twenty-first century. Very similar kinds of people. They're preparing to possess the land of God that God had dedicated to them. They've already learned how to trust the Lord as they wandered in the wilderness and relied on God for daily things in their lives. They want to be successful as they go into the Promised Land, as they're going into (for us) the Christian life. The book of Deuteronomy is a book about dedication for them. It's getting them ready to enter into the Promised Land.

So we're going to digress here for a minute and go back into Deuteronomy and see what Moses is telling the people. "Here's how you can be successful as you go into the land." These believers, as they're going into the land, have a number of challenges. They're going into a land that has a lot of evil influences around, influences that will distract them or may derail them from their spiritual lives. There will be huge temptations for the children in the Promised Land. The people who currently lived in the land were pagans and they had practices that were against God's values. How would these people be successful in a world with pagans?

These people were just like us. They loved God. They loved their kids. They wanted to be successful in their lives. They wanted to raise kids that were following after God. They wanted to raise children that would be successful in their lives even in the midst of all the temptations that were there. What are they going to do?

In the midst of that, God shared some specific instructions in Deuteronomy 6. He starts in verse 6 with one verse because you see these Israelites are going to go into the land; some of them will be successful and some will fail. Some of their children will marry pagan wives. Some of them will die because they are not obeying the Lord. They get tied into things that are not right. What is going to be the difference between those that are following the Lord and being successful and those that are not? It's obeying Deuteronomy 6. So Joshua 4 that we're talking about today is really the application of what Moses told them to do in Deuteronomy 6. That's why we're going back to this passage.

If we look at Deuteronomy 6:6 we see it says, *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.* Deuteronomy means second law. Moses is saying, "Here's the law. You're getting ready to go into the Promised Land; you need to know these commands." And he says, "Number one, you need to impress these on your own hearts." We need to remember that. Before we can start teaching our children to do anything or passing the faith on to other people, we must have it ourselves. We must be the ones who are trying to understand what God has for us.

He says that your commitment to the Lord is going to get you through the tough times and it's going to teach you how to help your child deal with the daily struggles that your child will face. Kids learn how to deal with conflict or how to accept "no" as an answer or how to respond to correction as they're watching their parents interact with life situations. Spiritual growth takes place in the lives of the parents and then children are watching what's happening and the faith then is passed on to the next generation.

God provides tools and methodology in His word. The more we study God's word the easier it is for us to pass on something to our children and for them to receive that message of faith and empower them with that message.

The passage continues in those next verses, verses 7-9, telling them what to do with the commands that they've got on their hearts. He says this: *Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.* As you look in that passage you can

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break those instructions into three different ideas that we put all together. We put them all together and then our faith gets passed on to our children.

Idea number one is to build relationship. Because that relationship is really significant. Do you see in that verse there? It says, *when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, when you get up*. You're relating. The relating that you do, that relationship that you do is important. But the relationship isn't important just so that we have happy families. That's not the goal that God has for relationship. There are two other things we need to do.

The second one is to share scripture. Do you see that in the beginning? *Impress them*. The word *them* is repeated several times in these verses. What is the *them*? It's the commands that are given to us. *Impress them on your children, talk about them, tie them, bind them, write them*. Those are the commands. In other words, sharing scripture with our children is going to be really helpful for them to understand how to live in this world. How do you handle the various challenges? God has so many different strategies in His word that help us. By sharing scripture with your children, you will help them know how to face the challenges in their own lives.

Build relationship, share scripture, and then practice faith. It's the daily practicing of faith, like tying the symbols on your hands and putting them on your foreheads. It isn't just a Sunday experience; this is an experience that's practicing the faith. So when children look at you practicing the faith, they see something very significant in your life. Kids learn from their parents how to learn unfairness, how to handle resources in life, how to think about others. There's no greater gift that you can give to your children to help them be successful then to pass the faith on to them so that they can understand what that looks like.

Today we're going to talk about sharing the scriptures and passing on our faith to other people. For parents that may mean children. Today I'm going to ask you to take a 90-Day Adventure. We as pastors are going to equip you to share your faith with other people. We're going to talk about how we do that in the family, but not just in the family, just as adults as we're trying to pass the faith on to our kids or to other people who aren't our kids. Teenagers, I want you specifically to know about how you're involved in this passing on of the faith. That's what we want to talk about as we're moving forward.

Let's go back, again, to Deuteronomy 6. A little bit further in the passage as Moses is giving instructions to the people, he tells them these words in Deuteronomy 6:20. Think about this because we're in Joshua 4 applying what Moses is telling them in Deuteronomy.

He says, *In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the Lord sent miraculous signs and wonders—great and terrible (those are the ten plagues)—upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. He's bringing us to the Promised Land is what he's saying. The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. And if we are*



*careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.”*

Moses is commanding the people back in Deuteronomy to talk about your faith, tell your kids about what happened back there in the Red Sea when we crossed over, how God rescued us out of Egypt. Tell them because their spiritual history is very important. They need to know how they're tied into something bigger than just who they are.

Now they're crossing over the Jordan River. Now they're moving into the Promised Land and the same thing is going to be true. The very first thing they do when they cross over the river is they take those stones, they build this monument, and they're going to do exactly what Moses had told them to do. Talk, parents, with your children about the Lord and about what God has done.

I'm convinced all of us could build a memorial pile of stones because God has worked in our lives. I think all of us could do that. If you're a Christian today and you've accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior then you have stoned your building. Maybe you only have one or two if you're a brand new Christian. Or you've been around for a while, you have several of them. All those become very important as you're moving forward. But I don't think this is just a story for parents to share with their children. God wants us all to be able to pass the faith on to other people. That's part of what we're doing. We live in a broken world. We live with hurting people who need a message.

In the New Testament, Peter uses these words to describe the very same thing that Moses is telling the Old Testament believers. He says in 1 Peter 3:15, *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Do you see what he's saying? First, take care of yourself. Just like Moses said, "Have these commands on your heart."* Then he says, *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

What does it take to pass the faith on from one person to another? Does it take a college degree? Does it take the fact that you've been saved for a long time or you've been through some kind of a class to teach you how to pass on the faith? No. It doesn't take that. What it takes is that you have a personal faith.

I think some parents feel inadequate about passing the faith on to their children because they themselves don't have a lot of Bible knowledge or they don't have the teaching techniques that might be helpful. I think maybe that's why some parents delegate the job of spiritual training to the church leaders. To try to allow church leaders to somehow take on this role, that somehow they're the professionals. They can pass the faith on, so I'm going to take my kids to church where they're going to learn about God.

I think taking your kids to church is a great idea. And I think that we as a church have a responsibility to support you in your work with your children. But the primary person who passes the faith on to children is not the church. The primary person is the parent. The only degree that anybody needs to pass on the faith to someone else is the B.A. degree, Born Again. If

you are born again then you have the ability to share something, you have a story that you can pass on to other people.

Some might ask a good question. Since I don't feel adequate to pass the faith on to my children, why can't I just let the church do it for me? Well, it's a misunderstanding of that question that causes some junior high kids or high school kids to drift away from the faith and decide they don't want to be Christians when they get older. They're learning about faith on Sunday, they're learning about book knowledge, but they're not learning many times how to put that faith into action, how to practice it. It's the daily interaction that happens at home where children are learning how to respond to difficult situations, to deal with frustration, to handle unfairness, to deal with the challenges that they face.

See, when parents give up the job and allow churches to do it instead, children miss out on that important message that faith is a daily experience. It's something that happens on a daily basis. It's living it out. It's not enough to give our kids head knowledge or even wholesome activities by taking them to church. It is important that we are practicing the faith and showing children what it looks like in very practical terms. How do we live out faith in our daily lives?

The problem I think we face is that all families are broken. All people are broken. And sometimes we say to ourselves, "I'm a broken person. I'm not qualified to pass the faith on to my kids." But I would suggest that in your broken life right now you have the ingredients for discipleship to follow the Lord. In the midst of following the Lord, God teaches you new things in the midst of your broken situation. Whatever the challenges are that you're facing, God is teaching you some things.

Children see that. "My parents were struggling, but God was working in their lives." "We didn't have a lot of money to be able to celebrate Christmas, but God was working in my parents' lives." "My parents weren't even on the same page spiritually, but God was working in my dad's life or in my mom's life." When children see that, that's passing the faith on. How do we respond in difficult situations? God wants to do some great things.

Let's go back to Joshua 4 now because Joshua 4 is the practical application of what we saw Moses teaching them in Deuteronomy 6. They've crossed over this special river, the Jordan River, and the very first thing they do is they set up a monument in order to pass the faith on to others.

You might think this is a sermon for parents. It's not. Look at the passage in Joshua 4:21. Notice in verse 21 it says that Joshua speaks to all the Israelites. He doesn't say, "We're going to have a parent meeting now. All the parents come over here. We're going to talk to parents." He doesn't do that. He says, "I want everybody to understand this message." This is a message for all of us to realize, even if being with children isn't a part of your life right now. We all have that particular message that it's important we share the message of God's grace and His power with everyone.

I'd like to talk to teens for a moment here. You young people, I am so grateful that you come to Calvary Chapel. I look for ways to tailor the message that I am presenting to you in particular so

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that you can understand how to apply God's work to your life now. Wherever you are in your life, you need to recognize the power and the grace of God. It's strong. It's strategic. And today I'm going to invite you as young people to join with me in a 90-Day Adventure to be a part of this receiving of the faith. You might say, "Well this is really parents that are being talked about," but I don't think so. In fact look at Joshua 4:6 and 21. Who starts the dialogue about spiritual things? You see that? Who's starting the dialogue there? It says when the children ask their parents. Children need to ask questions. They need to know what questions to ask in order help them catch the faith and understand what that looks like.

I went out to breakfast this week with a boy who's ten years old. I'm preparing this message so I ask, "Can I share this message with you?" He says, "Okay." So I shared a part of Joshua 4 and I said, "Whose job was it to ask the questions? Look at this," I handed him my Bible. He says, "The children ask the questions." I say, "What questions do you ask your mom and dad? They're Christians. What questions are you going to ask them?" He didn't know. I said, "Do you know how your mom and your dad came to know Jesus?" He knew a little bit. I said, "That's one of the first things you want to find out. How did they come to know Jesus? When did they come to know Jesus? Why did they come to know Jesus?"

If your parents are Christians, they made a very important statement in their life that's affecting their whole life. You want to find out more about that. I challenged this ten year old boy to take the 90-Day Adventure. He doesn't attend our church. "I'm challenging you. Take the 90-Day Adventure and in three months I'll take you out to breakfast again. I want to hear more information about what God is doing in your life."

Teens, you want to see that God is directing this passage to you. This isn't just something for adults. I want to encourage you to take this adventure we're going to talk about.

Parents, I want you to take this 90-Day Adventure and I want you to think of ways that you can pass your faith on to your children. Maybe it's sharing the monument stones. Maybe it's reading the Bible around the table. Maybe it's talking about life when you sit at home and you walk along the way. We got a lot of ideas to help you do that in this 90-Day Adventure.

But I don't think this passage is only for parents and children. All of us want to be passing the faith on to others. So even if you're not involved with children and passing the faith to the next generation, I want to encourage you to take the 90-Day Adventure starting today.

We'll talk more about what that looks like in a minute, but first let's go back to Joshua 4:10 and read the rest of the passage and see what they actually did after Joshua got the instructions.

Verse 10 of Joshua 4: *Now the priests who carried the ark remained standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything the Lord had commanded Joshua was done by the people, just as Moses had directed Joshua.* So Joshua's being a good leader here and he's watching over what's happening to make sure it's done right.

*The people hurried over.* I like that because I'm imagining in my mind how you get a million people across a river bed to the other side when the water's been stopped up some distance away.



They had lots of room to cross over, but it says they *hurried over*. I like that because I'll bet they did hurry over. They didn't know when that water would be released again and it would go at flood stage. "Let's go! Let's get across!" A million people crossed over that river.

*The people hurried over, and as soon as all of them had crossed, the ark of the Lord and the priests came to the other side while the people watched.* I'm sure all the people turned around to see this big thing about to happen. As the priests are coming out of the water, what's going to happen in this particular situation? Because the water was running pretty fast before. The priests stepped into the water, the waters parted, stopped up far distance in advance so they could all cross over, and now the people are watching.

Verse 12: *The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, armed, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them. About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the Lord to the plains of Jericho for war.* We're going to do business here. They had a mission that they're on.

Verse 14: *That day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they revered him all the days of his life, just as they had revered Moses.* What we see here is this is one of the turning events that raised up a new leader, that Joshua is now recognized as someone who is being led by God and therefore people will follow him.

Verse 15: *Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Command the priests carrying the ark of the Testimony to come up out of the Jordan." So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan." And the priests came up out of the river carrying the ark of the covenant of the Lord.* Watch what happens here. *No sooner had they set their feet on the dry ground than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and ran at flood stage as before.* Wow. What an amazing miracle of the power of God. All of a sudden then the water starts coming back and people are going, "Whoa! Get out of here quick! Get back up here!" Just an exciting part of the story.

Verse 19: *On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites (here we are again), "In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over.* We got this story here about the Jordan River. We got another story about the Red Sea. God's done some amazing powerful things. Kids you need to understand that. Passing on the faith to the next generation.

Verse 24: *He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful.* That's the message we want to share with other people. Children and adults, we want everybody to know the hand of the Lord is powerful, it's strong. It's the hand of the Lord that rescued me and my twelve stones. It's the hand of the Lord I saw do miracles in my life. The hand of the Lord is powerful. *And so that you might always fear the Lord your God.*

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Children benefit from hearing faith stories. Faith stories from their own parents, but also from other people because it gives them a spiritual history. It allows them to see their own faith in the context with other people. In fact even as children are learning more about the word and they're learning more about God, we can ask them to share with us their faith story. How did God answer your prayer? What's a verse in the Bible that's helped you in your own spiritual life? What has God done in your life? We want to allow children to see that in very practical ways.

One dad took his fourteen year old son to a men's breakfast where they heard a sports figure telling about his personal faith. That fourteen year old boy was really impressed that here you have this sports figure trying to apply his faith in that kind of an arena. It was really interesting for him and it gave him and his father opportunity to talk about how they could apply in their own lives their faith and make that work. Powerful stuff.

Pierre was fifteen years old when he was arrested. The reason he was arrested was because he and his friends had gone out to the street and were throwing rocks at cars going by. Well, parents reacted pretty strongly to this. They restricted him. They helped him find new friends; restricted him from those friends. He had to go to court and they accompanied him to court, but allowed him to face the judge and the consequences of community service involved in that whole situation.

But here's an interesting thing that happened. Because Mom and Dad had listened to a message at church about passing the faith on to children, they realized, they were convicted that they really hadn't done that as much as they should. They had brought their kids to church regularly, but they realized they hadn't done much of that at home. At least not as much as they feel like they should have. So they decided they were going to do something different. They decided to commit themselves to a family time in their home once a week for twenty to thirty minutes. They would talk about the faith in that particular arena.

At first, Pierre thought this was a discipline time and he kind of reacted like "I got to go through this along with all the other disciplines I'm getting for this kind of thing." But that changed quickly because Mom made a special dessert for them during this family time and Dad looked for creative ways to make the Bible lesson interesting.

One of the first things they did was take a passage from the Bible that talked about relationships and the one that says *be on guard against the Pharisees* in Luke 12. It says, *Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees*. So Dad took a packet of yeast, put it in a zip loc bag with some warm water and then some sugar and just let it sit. Over the next few minutes, because the yeast was alive and feeds off the sugar and the byproduct is carbon dioxide, it just expanded the bag. It was kind of cool. Pierre looked at that and says, "That's kind of interesting," giving Dad an opportunity to talk about how in that passage Jesus is saying be careful of the yeast of the Pharisees because it will affect you in the same way that bad friendships can affect you. And they started talking about the relationships that they had.

It was an interesting experience that they did and over time they started to grow more in their faith together. Change started to take place in Pierre's life over time. Mom described it this way: "Pierre is changing. He seems to be being more careful about his friends and is making choices

that aren't as self-focused as we've seen in the past. He's thinking about others and seems to be more sensitive to what God is doing around us. I'm sure that going to court and our form of discipline has helped, but I would say the increase of spiritual activity in our family also contributed greatly." They're using spiritual activity to help Pierre make some significant changes.

When asked about how things were going and how things were different, Pierre said this: "I realized that what I did was stupid. I shouldn't have done what the other guys were doing. I just got caught up in the moment." When asked about how his family was helping him to grow and be strong, he made this interesting statement. He says, "I have a great family. My dad and mom are Christians and they're teaching me how to live like a Christian too." Now Pierre has a lot to learn, his parents have a lot to learn, but together they're growing in some significant ways. Spirituality and growing in faith is very much a part of that.

When children are asked the question, "Who is the person who is responsible for training you spiritually?" what is their answer? Because if children say, "My Sunday School teacher," or children say, "My Christian schoolteacher," then they've got the wrong answer. The right answer is "the person responsible for training me spiritually is my mother and my father." That is the person who's responsible for that. It's not just parents who need a vision for passing the faith on to children, it's young people who need a vision for having the faith passed on to them. They're the ones asking the questions. Parents pass their faith on to their kids, no matter what that faith is. If parents have an unnoticeable faith, then that's the faith they're passing on to their children.

In the Jackson family, Dad and Mom were disheartened by the competition and competing that they saw in their kids. They determined that they would use the scriptures to help their children learn some valuable things. They introduced them to Mark 10 which tells a story of two brothers in the Bible who were fighting over the best seat. James and John came to Jesus, "Can we have the best seat? *Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.*" Jesus' answer to them was, "*Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all.*"

After sharing the verse, Mom and Dad taught them a game called The Upside-Down Game. It's a game that says in the next five minutes you earn points by serving someone else and helping them feel good. So right away Dad says, "Mom, you're really pretty." Dad got a point. Mom gets up and she starts rubbing Dad's back. She got a point. The kids started participating and getting points, mainly with Dad and Mom, but pretty soon they started talking to each other. "Desmond, you're great at baseball." Jared got a point. In those five minutes they illustrated that God turns upside-down the principles of servant hood and greatness by playing that Upside-Down Game. Then they talked about the value of serving one another and making that a part of their lives.

I want to encourage you today to think about ways that you can share your faith with other people. For some of you that's children, for some of you teens that's getting it from your parents, and for all of us, that means just sharing our faith openly with other people. That's a hard thing to do sometimes.

## Starting the 4/14 Family Challenge 90-Day Adventure

I want you to take the pieces of paper that I've given to you. This salmon colored one describes what we're talking about. I want in particular for you to look at this cream colored one and take it out with me. I want to challenge you to mark that first box and say, "Yes, I want to participate in the 4/14 Family Challenge 90-Day Adventure to pass the faith on to others." Whether that means in your family or outside, you're saying, "Yes, I want to grow in my ability to pass the faith on to other people."

This is an opportunity we all have to grow in this particular area of our lives. This is something that God wants us to do in general. It's a discipline that we have. It's a responsibility that God has given to us. But I think it's hard. I think it's hard sometimes to know how to share the faith with others. And that's why we as pastors want to come alongside you and give you some ideas, some ways to do that. So my first challenge to you is to take this piece of paper. I'm challenging you to do something before God. You don't need a piece of paper to do something before God. You could just go before God and say, "God, I want to do this."

If you mark 'yes' on here, you're joining with other people that are saying, "Yes, we want to do this. We want to work on this in our lives." But then maybe you'd like some support from Pastor Erik and myself. We're committed to help you pass the faith on to others, so maybe you would check one or more of those three boxes.

"Yes, I would like to receive a weekly email encouraging me as a spiritual leader with my kids as I pass the faith for twenty to thirty minutes a week." So as a parent, we'll give you some ideas. You can take those or use your own, but we'll be happy to send you ideas, if you'd like, once a week. That's why we're asking for your email address on this particular piece of paper.

Or maybe you're a young person today and you'd like to mark that second one. "I'm a teen and I want the questions I can ask my parents and others to learn more about the faith." We've designed some questions that children can ask their parents. Questions that I gave to this ten year old boy this week. Questions that will engage your parents in spiritual dialogue and teach you some very interesting things about your parents.

And then lastly, "Yes, I would like ideas to share my faith with others." Maybe you're an adult; kids aren't really a part of what you're doing right now, but you want to learn how you can be more effective at passing your faith on to other people. Pastor Erik is an expert at this. I'm always amazed at his ability to share and challenge people about Jesus Christ. Sometimes he doesn't even know the people and he can engage in close dialogue very quickly about their faith. Other times it's people who are already saved and he has an ability to challenge people. How do you get in those conversations? How do you open doors? Pastor Erik is writing thirteen emails that he'd be happy to share with you.

I'm encouraging you to fill out this piece of paper and turn it back into us. There's a bucket on the way out there that you can drop this thing in and then we will be happy to encourage you as you're trying to pass the faith on to others.

I'm going to pray for us all in just a moment, but I want to share with you one more Bible verse that helps us really recognize our role in the world. Look at this verse in 2 Corinthians 2:14. It

says this: *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*

When we go out into public we should smell nice as Christians. Smell so nice that people are saying, “What’s that perfume you got on?” We’re sharing the message of who Jesus Christ is. We’re passing the faith on to others. We’re telling people, “Hey, I got some great perfume here. You want to smell this? Boy, this is great stuff. This is really who God is because God is powerful. Let me show you what He’s done in my life. Let me show you how He’s changed who I am. Let me tell you about what God can do for you.” God desires to work in all of our hearts. Passing the faith on to others is part of the mission that God has given to us. Let us join together as we do that.

Let’s pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we want to serve you. We love you so much. Lord, I ask that you would be working in the hearts and lives of each person here. As a church, grow us to be more effective in sharing who we are with other people. Even this private area, this intimate area of our hearts. Give us wisdom as we exchange faith, as we pass it on to other people so they can know more about who you are. Lord, bless us. We ask that you would teach us, grow us, and expand our borders in our personal lives as we obey you in this area. We ask this in Jesus’ name, amen.