



SESSION NINE Relating – Part 1

My thesis is that God has to do the parenting essentially, but the way He does it is two-fold. First He works *in* the parents and then He works in the child. The blueprint of what God wants to do *in* parents is very clear.

We've covered thus far three big areas that we see in the blueprint that God wants to work in us. Can you tell me what they are? In *God's* family the first thing we saw is that God *knows* this child and He expects us to know *something* about him. *Then* my Father—the Lord Jesus, all of Them—They prepare for Him a place. And He's prepared one for you. And so we, as parents, prepare a place for that child. Wonder of wonders, my heavenly Father gives me not only a place, but He gives me Himself—and He's *always* there. He never changes. He's never too busy. He's never preoccupied. He's always there. *That's* the blueprint! Be sure you know your *child*. Give him a place, but above all, give him a *god*. It'll be the *foundation* of his development. Two persons, intimately related and growing more and more into oneness, as *They* are. That's where we are.

Now, in this session, and in this *next* session, we come to what is *usually* called parenting. We have finally gotten to *parenting*. Well, what have you been doing all of this time? I don't know! *Seriously*, the books on parenting start *here!* I *cannot* develop parenting without going into these other things because I am convinced, *surely*, that your marital relationship and its effect on your child is more powerful than *anything* you ever do by way of parenting techniques. But we are, nonetheless, *finally* coming to the place where the *books* are written! This is *usually* called the parenting process. Now, this is what it *is!*

Now, let's look at our *model* again. And it's up *there*. This is not all God does. And really, it's not—. I don't know how to *compare* these things. You see the real—what they call the parenting process—is really *this*. If *this* is the child, and *this* is God, the *real* parenting process is *this*: What takes place between *him* and *Him*. Now *that* is what is usually called parenting. What takes place *between* the parent and the child? What do you *do* with this child? Now that you understand what he is; he's got all of these things. You've given him a place. You and your wife, or your husband, are committed to each other and *growing* in oneness, but you've *still* got to do something *with* him! You've got to *interact* with him; you've got to do *something!* *That* is usually called parenting! And most books that I'm familiar with that are written on parenting will be dealing with this. How are you going to deal with *that* thing you've got on your hands, for *whom* you've provided a place, toward *whom* you are giving a *good* marital relationship? What are you going to do with him? *That's* parenting *proper*. But I will remind you again, these *other* things are parenting, too. So I'll just put this as a *part*, another step in the parenting process.

Alright, let's look at our model. Do you know what God does to *His* children? This, to me, is *fantastic!* Do you know what He does to this child? Now see, when we go into this, when we talk about how God deals with a human being, *then* you're into this that we call salvation. And I'm awfully afraid because we *use* these words so often; we use theological abstractions so freely that we have forgotten, maybe, the *essence* of what salvation is. Now *that* is what we're dealing with! Now be *careful* and stay with me. Do you know what God *does* with His child? He *saves* him. He *redeems* him. We've heard *a lot!* We hear this all of the time. We talk about it as Christians. God redeems us. God *saves* us. But what's *involved* in that? What is it?

As I come close to consider what salvation is—really—in its essence, to my *amazement*, I hear the theologians talk, I turn to the Scriptures and I go from Genesis to Revelation and I see it there consistently, that when God *saves* a person it *always* involves two aspects! In salvation God first does *this*, and it always comes in this order—beginning way back in Genesis where He *first* talked to us about it, in seed form, until it comes into *great* expositions in the books of the Epistles. It is always given in to “*first* God does this and *then* He does this.” He never reverses. It *can't* be reversed. He *must* do this first, and *then* He does this.

Do you know what those two things are? The theologian talks about it. He simply says “salvation.” He uses a theological term, and I don't want to get into it. I'm not saying the theological term incorporates *all* of this, but he's

talking about justification. [Are] you with me? And what's the other? *Sanctification*. That's all there is. But now let's draw a little closer to that. Do you know what this means that God, in Christ—and when I get into the Epistles and I get these *great* words, and it runs *all* through the Epistles, those *great*, profound teachings in the Epistles, where God [says], “Once I was dead, but now in Christ Jesus I have been made alive. I've been raised together with Him and made to sit with Him in heavenly places,”—that “*in* Christ Jesus!” Do you know what that *is*? However you explain it, it is *essentially* this: An intimate relationship is now being established and maintained between this human being and the living God. Now, if you've lost sight of that, and if you *think* that salvation is a ticket to heaven, I plead with you, get back to the Epistles—the purpose of which is to *analyze* what happened to you when you were saved. Do you know what happened? “Oh, yeah, given a ticket to heaven?” If there's nothing else, that would be worth [an] eternity of praise. But there's a lot more. Do you know what it is? God has brought us into an intimate relationship with Himself—so intimate that the only way the New Testament Epistles can describe it is, “We are in Him and He is in us.” The Lord Jesus likens it unto the vine and the branch. And He says, “I am the vine, you are the branch. . .” Do what? “Ye that abide in Me has *relationship*”—*relationship, relationship!* If anything interferes with that relationship, you're in trouble spiritually.

So God—in the wonderful process of justification—Jesus Christ died in order to make it possible. He rose again, and in Christ I have been brought back into union with the living God and today I can say with great praise to God, “I and my Father are one.” It's an *intimate* relationship between me and God. May I suggest that to you? Salvation, essentially, is a *relationship* between *His* child and Himself. It cost the death of His Son to bring us back.

Do you know what the other side of it is? It's wonderful. And He tells me to abide in *Him*. Way back in the Old Testament it talks about walking with Him, and walking in His presence, and in that temple meeting with *God*, fellowship with *God*, communion with *God*. That's all the way through the Bible. Fellowship with God. The wonder of *walking* with Him and *talking* with Him, *worshipping* Him, *knowing* Him. That's relationship.

Then He says, “My child, we must move on.” And if anything happens to this [relationship], this cannot take place. I've got to maintain that relationship. And then He says, “I want to change you.” This is sanctification. “I want to change. What do I want to change? I want to change your behavior so that you will increasingly act like I do.” Now I hope you haven't gotten a bad taste for holiness. But here's what God says: “Be ye holy as I am holy.” Do you know what He's saying? “I want to change your behavior so that you *think* and you *feel* and you *act* increasingly like God. As beloved children, imitate *God*.” That's sanctification. Now those are the two things God *does*.

Now if you see other things—basic things—that are not included here, I hope you'll tell me. But I've run all through Scripture, and I see it in the beginning, way back in Genesis, and I see it running all through the Epistles, that God always does *this* and then *this*, and *this*, and then *this*. And He says that if anything happens to *this*, *this* will backfire. You *must* do this. “If you abide in Me, *then* you'll bring forth much fruit.” You see, there'll be a change. “If you *don't* abide in Me, there'll be no fruit.” You *must* have a relationship, and then this.

Now there's your model—what they call the actual parenting process. And I declare I'm about to blow a gasket! [I'm] overwhelmed with the absolute wonder [of this! And then I come down and I *listen* to the scientists, I *listen* to the scholars, and they tell me, and it's amazing, and I want to share just a *bit* with you. Do you know what they tell me? They tell me, “Do you know what this child needs?” “Yes.” “This child needs two things.” It's amazing. Not one, two—always in that order. Two things.

The first time I hit this in the sciences, I was studying, dabbling a little in anthropology and *teaching* a little anthropology. And anthropology studies various cultures, you know—goes out among other societies and sees how they do things in a very primitive, simple society. And they come back and tell me that a family—and this is amazing—that wherever they went, to the most primitive people way out in the jungles, had no touch with civilization, that they would always find that the family had certain functions for the children and guess how many functions it had? Guess. Two. And when I heard the anthropologists say that I said, “Well man, maybe we're right!” Maybe *He's* right. They have anthropological terms for it, but a family always does *this* for the child and always does *this*.

And the *last* confirmation that has come to me was just in the last few months. I told you in a previous session that in the last 10, 12, 15 years the market has been flooded with books on parenting. You see, everybody's getting into it. Everybody's getting into it. Scholars are writing, and finally in the last oh, maybe a year or two, they're coming out with *textbooks*—*textbooks*—on parenting. Now that's a long list. You see, they start with the scholars writing all highfaluting theories and then it trickles down through *Reader's Digest* to the populous, and then the Christians finally pick it up and they start talking about it. And then finally you've got to have a textbook because so

many people are stirred up, they've got to have a course in it at the university, so they come out with a *textbook* on it.

So I picked up one of these textbooks on parenting and guess what I read? I will now *read* it to you. This is a textbook on parenting. "To provide the range of techniques, this book describes five strategies of parenting and shows how they are applied to particular problems." And she divides these five strategies, by the scholars, into guess how many categories? Three strategies—those of Thomas Gordon and Dorothy Briggs (she's the one I was quoting from the other night)—those three are on *this* side. Guess what *they* emphasize? They emphasize communicating feelings and establishing relationships with children. Two strategies—those of Dreikurs and the behaviorists—emphasize ways of changing behavior. So you listen to the scholars and one of them says, "What you need is to relate to your children." And another one says, "What you need is to learn how to change his behavior."

Guess what God says? Come on, tell me. What does God say? "*You need both.*" I don't know why we can't have both. And I'm going to set it before you: That's what my *Father* does. He first establishes and maintains an intimate relationship with *us*. And then, on the basis of that relationship, He begins to change that behavior so that I'll be increasingly like Him and some day, praise His name, I will be like Him.

Now turn down here. Do you know what you have to do in the parenting process? Number one, you *must* first—and it must come *first*—I don't mean you do this for 20 years and then you do this. But in priority, certainly, and really *time wise* it must precede the other. First, you *must* establish and *maintain* an intimate, *warm* relationship with your children. There *must* be a warm, intimate relationship with your child. *That relationship!* I don't think I need to tell you that we Americans are awfully short on relationships. We came out of a historical background of individuals. We are individualists to the core, and we go our own way, and *relationships* are very, very *scarce* among us. So I'm not surprised to find that this aspect of child training—parenting—is a little weak among us. God puts it first. You *must* establish a warm relationship with your child.

And then, you see, the second thing is, what do you want to do? I want to *change* him. I want to *change* his behavior so that—now this is an awful responsibility—change his behavior so that he acts like—say it—*me*. Oh, yeah. *Change his behavior so he will act like me.*

Now I'm going to say something; I'm not sure how to do it, but now watch it. If up here, this *saves* a person and this *sanctifies* him, may I suggest to you, some of the psychological theorists are telling me that if you do not establish an intimate, warm relationship with your child—I'm quoting one of them, and I wish the book was in print so I could recommend it to you. She says if you don't have that warm relationship with that child, you'll *rob him* of his humanity. I can turn that around, and you'd better be careful [of] the way you use this outside of this circle. Look, if this relationship really brings me into salvation, *that's salvation!* Now be careful; the first thing you must do for your children is to save their humanity. Do you know how you do it? By warm, intimate relationship with them. I'm serious.

Many, many young parents that I talk to, the first questions that come have to do with what? Changing them. "I want to change him, I want to change him." I don't think—. Now, I don't go out a lot, you know, and I don't talk—. That's not my calling. So I don't talk to a lot of young parents. I do preventative work, I hope. But I don't think I've ever had a young parent ask me, "How can I *relate* to my child?" But how to change his behavior, how to correct him, how to discipline him. "When should I start spanking him? When should . . .?" We're short on *this* [relationship]. May I say—? Now you'll understand me; you must save him before you can sanctify him. You must save his humanity, and let me just show you so you'll not misunderstand what I'm saying. You must save him in the sense that if you do *this* he *will* be saved from those *awful* hang-ups that will be *bonds* about him, *scars* upon him for the rest of his days. Do you know where that comes? That comes in *this*: You *must* establish and maintain an intimate relationship with your child.

All right, let's get into that. And this session and the next one after it I would like to deal with this aspect of what is usually called parenting. *How do you do that?* How do you relate to [your child]? How do you pick up this, this newborn infant? How do you *relate* to it? How do you *establish* that relationship? May I tell you, you do it just the way *God* does it. I'm *overwhelmed* with this! Now I'm not just being pious, or, you know, spiritual. I have *seen* this, and I see it up there, and then I hear the child psychologists say it. . . . Some of them scream about one of them. Some of them scream about another, but God does them *all!* And I charge you, study later! Study it for yourself; and you'll see things that I haven't begun to see.

What does *God* do to establish *relationship*? I'd like to mention just a few, a couple this session and some more next session. What does God *do* to bring us into that relationship? Oh, I'll mention a couple of things and then I hear

the child psychologists, and especially the child psychiatrists, *screaming* at the American society, “This must be *done*, or you’re going to reap some terrible harvests. “ Number one, before I go into that may I just simply say because this child is “your flesh and blood,” does not necessarily give you a head start in relationship. Now, don’t misunderstand me. I say that for several reasons. Just because this is my own flesh and blood—and what I mean is it’s my own procreated child, my wife and I procreated this child—our first one [is] Jim; “that’s our own,” as we say, flesh and blood. *That* creative act of biology does *nothing* as far as relationship. What happens *after* that is relationship! I say that for two reasons. One is to let you know that relationship doesn’t have much to do with biology. I also say that to say this: that if you adopt a child, you can have just as clear, loving, warm relationship with that adopted child as with your *own* child. Relationship is how two people interact; it has not anything to do with biology. Now you mothers, I hope I’m not hurting you. What you’re talking about is *relationship*, not biology.

So you adopt a child; that’s great! There’s a lot of talk today about going back and finding your roots. I’m a little troubled by that. You’re not going to *find* much. Now, I’m not joking. I’m not saying you’re going to find some skeletons. I’m just saying that most of these who are hungry, there are some voids there and they think that if they find their *real* parents it’ll answer—. I just want to tell you, *it will not answer anything*. Even if you find out and it’s the most wonderful person in the world, that relationship has *not* been established. And *we* must . . . but any parent who has a child must establish and maintain an *intimate* relationship, and it doesn’t come from the *fact* that I biologically procreated this child. It must come from the time of birth *on*. How do you *interact* with that child? How do you do it? What do you do to *guarantee* a relationship?

Number one, I’ll do what *God* does. *Here’s* what He does. Now I’ve said this before in other connections, but I’ll say it again. *Be there*. All you have to do is be there. Is God always there? Yes or no. Is He always there? Yes. Do you know what He does? He just lovingly gives Himself. I’ll just tell you, “I’m always there. I’m here.” Do you know what that means?

Some of the research on child development, child training today, has moved into what some of you may have picked up the word, in those *early* moments after birth, and the theorists are beginning to call it “bonding.” I don’t know if you’ve heard that term. It’ll be in *Reader’s Digest* next month—if it has not already been there. That’s where I get my input. But they tell me that when those early moments after the birth of that child, and they’re changing the birthing patterns so that those first moments, if that mother *and* that father can hold that child close to them and caress that child, because you’re there! There’s a bonding that takes place. Now some of the theorists are battling as to whether those opening minutes are *critical*. I won’t get into that. I don’t think so. But I’ll tell you this: There’s something [that] takes place the moment at birth.

Our last son, when he had his two little children—boy when my child’s babies were born, they wouldn’t let me in the *county*, much *less* in the hospital, much *less* in the *delivery room*! “Well man, you’re not sterile; you don’t know a thing about this. Get on out in the farm, in the yard!” Do you know where *my* son was? He was right there, and when the baby was born he was the one that picked it up. It was a C-section, so his mother was out. But he picked the baby up and helped them, and he held the baby for those first few hours.

They tell me that something happens in those *early* moments, in those *early* weeks, in those *early* months. And I plead with you, you young mothers; give yourself to them. And you young fathers, spend time holding them. Do you know what will happen? There will be an attachment there. “Oh, that’s just not wholesome!” Yeah, it is. It’s an attachment just like he had to the mother’s body before he was born. Attached to the body, now he will *attach* himself to you. They call it bonding. Do you know what that is? That’s a relationship.

But now watch. Do you know what’s happening in American society? You take that child, and pull him away his mother and drop him off at—. I’m not trying to hit anybody; you pull him out and leave him in a daycare center, and then take him over to Grandma and then take off to Uncle Jim’s. “Well, he’s just a baby; he doesn’t know anything.” *Doesn’t know anything?* He’s *got* to have [relationship]. Try it with your azalea plants. Pull them up, you know. . . . I mean, really! Those roots get bonded down into the soil, then you pick them up and you shake it, you know, and look at them. “Yea, it’s going pretty well,” then put it back down. Then the next day, come, shake it up. “Oh,” you say, “that won’t, that won’t hurt the plant.” I want to tell you, the relationship between a new infant and his parents—*mother and father*—is like that. I’ll guarantee you—especially in those early years—if you’re there all of the time, if the same person is there all of the time, all the time, there will be a bonding, there will be an attachment, there will be a relationship. He’ll come to you. *I know* that.

Let me mention one other. Look. You do what God does. Do you know what He does? One of the most wonderful things about your Father [is] He *always* meets your needs as a Shepherd—*always*. He provides all your

needs. He provides your needs. I'll tell you this, and I can demonstrate it. If we had time, if I could take some of you out, I can *show* you. I can *prove* it to you. I used to work on my students at school in psychology. I don't play with them anymore, but I can prove it to you. If you meet those *drastic* needs to be *loved*, to be *recognized*, he'll come to you! I've had students who have been *starving*! And I just give them a little drop of acceptance, and that they're worth something. Do you know what they do? They come and attach themselves to me and sometimes I have to beat them off. I'm serious. You want to know how to get your children to relate to you? You meet their needs. You fill those cups. You let them know that you think they are the *most important* person in the world, and you're giving them your *undivided* attention and you're giving your *life* to *them*. Do you know what will happen? Then, as they sense that you are meeting their *needs*, do you know what will come? They'll *come* to you and there'll be a *relationship*. And I've just, in the last several weeks, begun to wonder if that's not that relationship of trust. If you meet their needs, then they'll come to *you*. I want to tell you, if you don't, don't be surprised, as soon as they can, they'll run away. That's what God does. *He showers you!* And before He moves to anything else, before He even *begins* to think about changing your behavior, He'll meet your needs. He'll meet your needs! And that relationship will be maintained. And then He'll say, "Come on, let's change." Those are two things *God* does. And I'll guarantee you, if *you* do them, your child will be relating to you and you to him.

In our next session we will look again at God, the way *He* relates and see some other ways *we* should relate.