

A Tale of Two Mothers

- Hello, I'm Ashley. It's mother's day here at Trinity. And we wanted to ask the Trinity kids here in the backyard, what they have to say about their wonderful moms. What is your favorite thing to do with your mom?

- Play.

- Color.

- That she plays games with me.

- What does your mom do to show you that she loves you?

- Kisses!

- She serves us every day in any possible way.

- She makes a lot of food.

- If you could give your mom a present, what would you buy her?

- A penny bank.

- A card.

- A card? What would you write in it?

- That I love her.

- That's sweet.

- It would be a love robot. Robot that gives people love.

- Mommy is as pretty as a what?

- A butterfly.

- A butterfly?

- Good as my daddy.

- As pretty as your daddy. That's a great answer. What do you love most about your mom?

- Jesus.
- Does your mommy love Jesus?
- Do you love Jesus, Mama?
- Can we all say, "Happy Mother's Day" super loud?
- Happy Mother's Day!
- Hello Mommy.
- Happy Mother's Day.
- Happy Mother's Day!
- Happy Mother's Day.
- Happy Mother's Day.
- [Both] Happy Mother's Day.
- [Both] Happy Mother's Day.

- All right, happy Mother's Day, amen. Well, people in Christianity like to talk about full-time ministry and I'll tell you this, if anybody's in full-time ministry, it's a mom. Amen. It is a 24/7. And let's just say that the last two years for moms have been particularly complicated. Schools closed, activities canceled, sports surrendered. And moms, you've been doing a great job. We love you. We're honored to have you join us for our Mother's Day weekend, whether you're live, online. So let's just give a round of applause. Thank all the moms. Amen. So I'm gonna pray over the moms. And then I got a little Bible teaching and I'll bring Grace up and interview her. Father, God, thank you so much for our mothers. Lord God, we just know that the people that we are and the lives that we live are because of the sacrifices made by our moms. And God, I wanna honor my mom today. I love her with all my heart. Looking forward to having her visit Arizona here in a few weeks and get some time with her. God, thank you that my wife is an incredible mother and Lord God, thank you for all the incredible moms here at Trinity Church. There's a lot of kids and they're loved and they're blessed and they're served. And so God, as we open your word, I pray that you would just open heaven and just pour out the Holy Spirit in a fresh blessing and anointing and encouragement on the mothers as we celebrate them and your work through them on this great Mother's Day weekend in Jesus's good name. Amen. Well, what we're gonna be is in Genesis chapter-- Or excuse me, Galatians chapter four. And we've been in the book of Genesis. If you're new, we're going through a book of the Bible called Genesis, and we've been looking at some families in that great Old Testament book. And what

happens in Galatians chapter four, the apostle Paul, he comments on two mothers, Sarah and Hagar. And so we're gonna call this sermon "A Tale of Two Mothers." And so to catch you up to speed, before we meet these two women, there was a family, a married couple Abraham and Sarah, and they were non-Christians. They were living in ancient Babylon, modern day Iraq. Generations didn't know the Lord, just regular people, living a regular life. And then God showed up and he introduced himself to them. They entered into relationship with him and he put a commission and a command before them. And what he told them was, "I need you to leave your land, "your Homeland, your family, your business, "everyone and everything you've ever known, "move to a place that I will show you." And it was a tremendous act of faith 'cause they didn't know where they were going. Just that God was leading. So they ventured forward. And eventually they settled in the place that God had promise for them. The one promise that was not yet fulfilled, however, is God told him that he would give them a son, a baby boy. That through this son would come many sons and a nation. What we now today would call the nation of Israel and that through the nation of Israel, the Jewish people would come, not just their son, but the son of God, our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. So they had waited for around a decade. At this point, they're very elderly. Sarah, the wife has always been barren and now they are well beyond childbearing years, they have never had a child. That's the longing of their heart. And they've been waiting for over a decade. She's around 75. He's around 85. Just ladies, imagine. How many of you mothers are tired right now because you have little ones? Now imagine if you were 75, homeschooling on zoom. I mean, that's where Sarah is at. So she's getting impatient, you know, "I'm 75, where is my kids?" So she comes up with a very bad idea and she assumes or presumes that maybe God isn't going to follow through on his promise. So she decides that they will take matters into their own hands. So she takes Hagar, who is her handmaid and she says, "You can also marry my husband. "And then you can have a child with him. "And then we can have that son be our own "to fulfill this longing and this promise from God." Well, this is a very bad idea because now Abraham has two wives, which is too many, okay. Too many. And eventually they have to wait 25 years before God enables Sarah to conceive and birth his son. Well, at this point, here's the problem. One husband, two wives, two sons. And this is literally division. Our word division in the English literally means two visions. So of course Hagar and her son Ishmael, she has a vision. My son was born first. He'll be the son of the promise. He'll get the inheritance. He'll be the one to lead the family into the future. Sarah has a completely different vision. "No, it's my son, Isaac. "He was the one promised by God. "I was the first wife. "He is the rightful heir, "and all of the inheritance and blessing "from his father on earth and his father in heaven "will come through my son." So now you have these two women and this is where we get the sermon title, "A Tale of Two Mothers" and they have division. And just for those of you who may not know, through Hagar and her son, Ishmael, he's gonna have 12 sons. And through those 12 sons come the Arab people. So the Arab people descend from Abraham through Hagar and Ishmael, and that ultimately Sarah and Isaac would see not 12 sons, but the 12 tribes of Israel. And today the Jewish people are descended from Isaac and through the family line of Abraham and Sarah, and spiritually Christians would be their descendants. So there is still division in our world. So this division that started in this home has continued now for 4,000 years. So Paul now in the New Testament, he reflects back on these two mothers and he has some great insights for us on this Mother's Day. He says this in Galatians four, "My little

children--" So he's got a father's heart and a good pastor has a father's heart, "For whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth "until Christ is formed in you." So he's using the analogy of childbirth and as a man, I think that's funny. No man knows what childbirth is like. Amen. Right? Some guys are like, it was like-- Nothing is like childbirth. I've watched it. Wow, wow. I've never been through anything like that, but he's using it as an analogy. And what he talks about here with childbirth is, there are seasons in life that are painful. But if you push through them, God uses it to birth new life, just like a mother doesn't really love giving birth. She loves the life that comes after the pain of the birth. And what he's saying is for those of us who are Christians, there are times in life that we're gonna have to push through a painful season so that then we can see God birth new life in and through us. So then he uses this analogy. "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, "do you not listen to the law?" So he is gonna go back to Genesis 16, "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, "one by a slave woman," that's Hagar and her son Ishmael, "and one by a free woman." That is Sarah and her son, Isaac. "But the son of the slave was born "according to the flesh "while the son of the free woman was born through promise." Now this may be interpreted allegorically. These two women are two covenants. One is for Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. She is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. She corresponds to the present Jerusalem for she is in slavery, we are told, with her children. And so what he says here, he's gonna take the story and he's gonna also teach it in a form of allegory. And so generally speaking, when we come to the Bible, we are to interpret it literally. Here he says, in addition to interpreting it literally, he's going to interpret allegorically. So literally there was one man, two wives, two sons, and they are actual human beings that exist in history, Abraham, Hagar, Ishmael, Sarah and also Isaac. He says, in addition to the literal meaning, he's going to use it as an illustration or a parable. He's gonna give us a second layer of meaning and truth. And he uses the word allegory. As a general rule, we don't interpret the Bible allegorically but here it tells us to. This is by the way, the only time in the entire New Testament that this word allegory or allegorical interpretation is ever mentioned. So they really did exist, but there is a secondary meaning that you and I are to learn from. And so what he's gonna do, he's gonna juxtapose these two mothers and the families that come from them to basically describe that there are two ways of having a relationship with God, or trying to have a relationship with God. There are two ways to parent a child. And on Mother's Day, there are two ways to mother your children. So compare and contrast for you. So there is Hagar and there is Sarah. These are the two mothers. Hagar has Ishmael. Sarah has Isaac. Those are their sons. And in this section of Galatians four, there are a series of comparisons and contrasts. Ishmael is born as a slave. Isaac is born free. Ishmael is born of the flesh. The normal way that all of us are. And Isaac is born again of the spirit in a supernatural way. Ishmael represents natural life lived without God in the Holy Spirit. Isaac represents supernatural life, lived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Ishmael represents earthly Jerusalem. How people on earth just commonly genuinely, regularly live their lives. Sarah and her son, Isaac represent heavenly Jerusalem. What the kingdom of God is like and what people are like when they live as citizens of God's kingdom, Ishmael persecutes Isaac, and Isaac is persecuted. As the world persecutes Christians and Christians suffered, that is denoted in this relationship between two sons. Ultimately Ishmael is cast out, but Isaac is never cast out and Ishmael does not receive the full inheritance, but Isaac does receive the full inheritance. And so what it's saying here is this, there are two mothers that literally historically

did exist. They have sons, but in addition, allegorically, there's a lot of lessons that we can learn from the way that these mothers raise their sons. Now, that being said, this leads to two kinds of home environments. There are two women and they depict or denote two types of home environments. And let me get into this because the environment is very important. We learned as we have been in the book of Genesis, that when God creates someone or something, he also creates an environment for it to flourish and to grow. So God made the air for the birds. God made the water for the fish. God made the land for the animals, and God made the Holy Spirit for us. That we need to be in the right environment for us to flourish. And so when it comes to the home, the question is, "What is the environment that is established in a home?" And what I think here is really interesting. He seems to be indicating, or at least inferring that the culture of a home is largely set by who? The mother. Most of the time, the mother is the dominant person and personality setting the culture of the home. There's nothing wrong with a woman working, but oftentimes mom is home more often. And dad is away more often, as a general rule. And mom is the one who architects the environment of the home. That was certainly the case in our home with the kids growing up. And so he wants us to examine first and foremost, what kind of environment, home environment did you grow up in? And then secondly, if you are a parent or hope to be a parent or grandparent, what kind of environment will be in your home for children? And so there are two kinds of home environments. He goes on to say this Galatians 4:26 through 31, "But the Jerusalem above is free, "and she is our mother. "For it is written--" Quotes Isaiah 54:1 in the Old Testament, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear, "break forth and cry aloud, "you who are not in labor. "For the children of the desolate one "will be more than those of the one who has a husband. "Now you, brothers, like Isaac are children of the promise. "But as at the time he who was born, "according to the flesh," that is Ishmael, "persecuted him who was born according to the spirit," that his Isaac, were still in comparison and contrast. "So also it is now. "But what does the scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son "for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit "with the son of the free woman. "So brothers, we are not children of the slave, "but of the free woman." Here's what he's saying. Let me break this down. There are two environments for a home. Law and grace. That's what he's saying. Law and grace. And Hagar represents a home environment that is law-based. It's a law-based environment. Sarah represents a home environment that is grace-based. So let me explain these to you. Law-based is this. I work. I have a lot of responsibility. I have a lot of burdens. I have a lot of pressure. I have a lot of expectations that are put upon me by those who are over me. If you grew up in a law-based home, you had a lot of anxiety. There was a lot of pressure to perform. You needed to not just pass your classes. You needed to get straight A's, you needed not just play on a sports team, you needed to be the MVP. You needed not just be in a band, you needed to play in the first chair. You needed not just go to college, but you needed to get into a good college with a lot of scholarships and awards. There was a lot of pressure to perform. There were a lot of expectations. It caused a lot of anxiety. Some of you flourished under this environment. You really like burdening yourself and producing results and you excelled. And you became arrogant. You lack compassion. And you judged all the other people who weren't as competent as you. Okay. Now, some of you struggled under this environment. Emotionally, it caused you a lot of anxiety and fear. You constantly felt pressure. And even if you did something that was successful, you had fear

because you had to keep succeeding. Some of you, it caused a lot of emotional struggle, spiritual struggle, and it really was difficult for you to live under that pressure. And some of you knew you would never succeed. So you didn't even try. You're just the rebellious kids. You're like, "If my parents don't grade on an A, B, C, D, F, "but it's pass or fail, I know I'm gonna fail. "So I'm not even gonna show up to take the test." You didn't even try. Now without raising your hand, especially if you're here with your mother, how many of you had siblings and I just explained your sibling relationship? Some of you were the ones you, "I did good under a law-based environment." Others of you, "I did not do well at all." And what it's saying here is that living under the law is like childbirth. It's very, very painful. And it hurts. The other environment is a grace-based environment and Sarah and Isaac has represented of that. In a law-based environment, it's about what I do. In a grace-based environment, it's about what God does. See, 'cause oftentimes people who are in a law-based environment, they're like, you gotta put a lot of rules on people. A lot of expectations, lot of pressure, you gotta push. You gotta make, them get-- 'Cause we want to get results. Well, grace also produces results, but it's called fruit. And fruit is something that is alive and comes out of a life-giving source. Jesus says, "If you abide me and I abide you, "you're gonna bear a lot of fruit." And so, it's not that work isn't done in a grace-based environment. It's that the work is done by God for you, not done by you for God. A lot of people are like, "What are you gonna do for God?" The presumption is that God needs something from me. God's not in heaven right now going, "Unless Mark takes care of this, "I don't know what we're gonna do." God doesn't need me. I need God. And I can't give to God, anything that he can't get for himself. So it's not about my work for God. It's about God's work for me, in me, and through me. This is how we explain a grace-based life, relationship, church, marriage, and family here at Trinity Church. First of all, God works for you. And his name is Jesus Christ. If you've lived under a law-based performance environment and some parents love and they mean well, but they just succeeded in business or they were in the military, or they're a former athlete and they're all about, you know, lots of pressure to perform. And they bring that into their family. Here's the big idea in Christianity, Jesus Christ is God, become a human being. He actually came into human history through the womb of his mother, Mary. It's amazing. God became a man, but before he became a man, he was a really little man, right? He was born, he was birthed. He grew up and he lived without any sin. Jesus perfectly fulfilled all of God's laws, no sin whatsoever. And then he goes to the cross and he takes our place and puts us in his place. And he pays all of our debt to God. And he ultimately takes all of our sin and gives us all of his righteousness. What this means is the work of salvation isn't done by us. It's done by Jesus. So he says on the cross, "It is finished." And you should just take a deep breath and go , "All the work of salvation is done. "Thank you, Lord Jesus." So he doesn't work for us. He dies and he rises and then he does the work in us and he sends the Holy Spirit. And what the Holy Spirit does in us, is he makes us new. This language here of birth, it's about new life. That's what it's about. Jesus doesn't just make you better. He makes you new. So what happens is, he takes out your heart of stone, he gives you a heart of flesh. He takes out your old desires. He gives you new desires. He takes out your indifference toward God and he gives you affection toward God. And now what happens is, you're changed at the deepest level of your being. And this includes your desires. So we always like to say here at Trinity, Christianity's not about what you have to do, it's about what you get to do, 'cause it's what you want to do. Like, I

read my Bible, not so that I, you know, will have God love me, but because I know he loves me. When I read the Bible, I learn more about that love and I enjoy it. I like it. I don't have to pray. I get to pray. I have a God who listens to me, right? I mean, how many of you you're like, "I can't get anybody to listen to me. "I can't get my German shepherd to listen to me." But my God will listen to me. So, I get to talk to him. I don't have to do what God says. I get to do what God says. What I found is, every time I do something other than what God says, I hurt myself. This is like a parent looking at a kid saying, "Don't do that. "You're gonna hurt yourself. "I love you. "Don't break the rules." So God changes our desires. So God works for us. God works in us. And then God works through us. Now our life has meaning, value and purpose. And God has things for you to do, but you're not doing them as works. You're doing them as fruit. You're not doing them for a relationship, but from a relationship, you're not doing it so that God will love you. You're doing it because God does love you. And you wanna be like the God who loves you. How many of you had a parent or a grandparent when you were growing up and they just loved you and you just enjoyed them, and you wanted to hang out with them, and you wanted to be like them 'cause they were so awesome. God's like that. My grandpa George was that guy growing up. He died when I was 10. I loved him with all my heart. He loved me. We had a grace-based relationship. He was super fun. His house was awesome. I always had a good time. And my grandpa wore overalls. So guess what I did as a little boy? I got me some overalls. My grandpa wore steel toe boots. So I got little steel toed boots. My grandpa would wear a white t-shirt. So I got a white t-shirt. My grandpa had a lunchbox. I got a lunchbox. When I was little, if you looked at me, at my grandpa, it was like somebody washed him in hot water and he got shrunk. That's what I looked like. 'Cause I love my grandpa and he's awesome. And he loves me and we have fun and I wanna be like him. That's a relationship with God as a father. That's what it's like to be the children of God. You know God loves you and he's in you and for you and through you, and as a result, you wanna be like him. And so ultimately, it leads to this comparison and contrast. And this may upset you a little bit. And if you're new, just ask your neighbor. You know, if you'll recover, 'cause we all start with a little bit of discomfort here. But what I wanna do is I wanna look at these two mothers, Hagar in a law-based environment and also Sarah in a grace-based environment. And I want you to look at the home that you grew up in, not to criticize, but to learn. And to look at what kind of home environment you might be creating, not to criticize, but to learn. So Hagar represents law-based homes. Sarah represents grace-based homes. I'll walk through these. In a law-based home, rules are the priority. Lots of rules. In a grace-based home, relationships are the priority. Let me explain this. In every home, in every home environment, do you need to have some rules? Yes. Okay. What happens if you have children without rules? Yeah. Prison riot. Because children don't have wisdom and most children don't naturally organize themselves, especially boys. Okay. Especially boys. You could look at a little girl and you could say, "I see a future." Look at a little boy, you're like, "Oh no." It takes more faith to raise a boy. It just does. Okay. 'Cause a little girl, she's playing with a doll and feeding it and the boy's banging it on a rock. You're like, this could go either direction. Okay? So in every home you need rules and the rules should be for the protection of the child. Most of the rules should be to keep them safe. So what I would always tell the kids is, "Be safe, have fun. "Love one another." Those are kind of my general principles. Be safe. Have fun. Love one another. When you make rules for the kids, they're usually to protect them. "Hey, you gotta

go to bed. "You do need to go to bed. "There is a bed time." And, "You need to get up and go to school. "You can't skip." And, well, what would other good, just basic rules be for children? You help me out. Hygiene. At least once a year, you're gonna need to get wet with soap. At least once a year. Okay. And you're gonna need to brush your teeth if you would like to keep them all, you're gonna need to do that. Hygiene. What else?

- [Congregation Member] Respect.

- Respect. You've got to learn to respect authority. 'Cause at some point you're gonna go to school and at some point you're gonna go to work. And at some point, if you don't learn these things, you're gonna go to jail. So you gotta learn these things. What else? Just basic rules to teach kids.

- [Congregation Member 2] No fires in your bedroom.

- Yeah. So you teach them-- You have a father of a son, he's like, "No fires in your bedroom." I don't think this is a hypothetical case study. I think this is a recent occurrence. You need to be safe, right? In addition, you need to do some chores. You need to help out. You need to learn, because when you're a child, we take care of you. But as you grow, you gotta take care of yourself and eventually you gotta take care of somebody else. So our goal is to help you learn responsibility. You need to eat good food. No, you can't have Red Bull at bedtime. We have some rules. Okay. But in addition to rules in a home, you really need to have relationship. And ultimately you've gotta figure out, do we go really high on the rules? And it's like a teeter-totter. If you go really high on the rules, you're gonna go low on the relationship. Low on the relationship. Because the rules just tell you what to do. What I would encourage you is, go high on the relationship, low on the rules. I'm not telling you not to have rules, but I'm telling you if you have a lot of rules, it's probably because you have a little relationship. 'Cause if we have a relationship, it's like, "Well, let's talk about it. "Hey Dad, I wanna stay up late tonight. "I don't have school tomorrow. "Well, you know the rules. "No, no Dad, we have a relationship. "Let's talk about this." In a relationship, you can abide by the rules. But then there are times that you can discuss or move the line of those rules. My goal is always to build a relationship that is so strong that we can discuss the rules. Some of the kids are just gonna be compliant kids. They're gonna just do what they're told. Others are gonna need to know why. How many of you were those kids? Like "Why, why, why, why, why, why?" And the parents are like, "I should have named you Why." I mean that's-- And sometimes those kids are rebellious, but sometimes they're just curious. They're like, "I just want to know why we have these rules." Now, if all you do is enforce the rules, but you don't value the relationship, you're gonna discourage the child rather than disciple the child. So in every home, there are rules in relationship, but in a law-based home, lots of rules, little relationship. Your parents don't talk to you much, pray with you. You can't negotiate things. You just obey the rules. In a grace-based environment, it's really heavy on relationship, conversation, interaction. And there are some rules. I'll give you another comparison in contrast. In a law-based home, it's about parental control. In a grace-based home, it's about parental influence. Let me give you an example. So when the kids are little, can

you more likely control them? Yes. They're little. So you can put them in a car seat. You can put them in a crib. You can wrap them in a blanket and they can't even get out. Right? They're they're trapped. You can pick them up. Right? You can put them in another room. As they get bigger, can you do this? You could try, but you're gonna fail. Okay. As soon as the boy's taller than his mom, a wooden spoon no longer bears any terror. That's just what happens. "I'll spank you." He's like, "That's adorable." And so-- So what happens is, if you're a high control parent, the control works when they're little, but as they get bigger, it becomes less and less effective. And so what happens as the kids get bigger, some parents double down on control, lots of rules, lots of intimidation. And as they get bigger, if you can't control them physically, you try and control them financially or emotionally. You make them feel guilty. And then you put strings on dollars, trying to control their behavior. The key is, as kids get older, you need to have more influence 'cause you're gonna have less control. Again, influence comes through relationship. Control comes through rules. So sometimes as the kids get older, the parents make more rules 'cause they want more control. And the issue is, they need more relationship and then they'll have more influence. One of our kids, and it's terrible being my kid, 'cause you're always in illustration. But one of my kids, before I would ever discipline them, I had to look them in the eye and tell them, "I love you with all my heart. "Of every human being on the earth, "I'm first in line for your good and your wellbeing." They just needed to know that I want to influence them. Not control them. I always like to say, with kids, it's good to connect before you correct. If they don't know that you care about them, they don't want you to control them. I don't know about you. I don't want people in charge of me who don't love me. And I don't want people in charge of me who are considering me and hearing from me. In addition, in a law-based home, the motivation is fear. In a faith-based home or in a grace-based home rather, the motivation is faith. Let me explain this to you. Oftentimes in a law-based home, it is fear that drives. Well, this could happen. That can happen. What about this? What about that? What about this? What about that? In a grace-based home it is, "Okay, we are concerned. "But at some point we have to acknowledge "that our God is involved in the life of this child." Okay. How many of you, you look back on your life and childhood and maybe you didn't even know the Lord, but the Lord was involved and did some great things to preserve you. God was good to me. The same God, who's faithful to my wife and I is faithful to our children. And it is saying, God is over this. God knows them. God loves them. We have to have faith that God has not abandoned this child. So again, in a law-based home, it's a lot of fear. In a grace-based home, it's a lot of faith. And let me say this. You can't raise a child without the Holy Spirit. See, a lot of people are like, "How'd you raise--" We have five wonderful kids. "How'd you raise five wonderful kids." I didn't, the Holy Spirit did. And we got to be a part of it. Once the Holy Spirit is in your child, it's like, you know what? The Bible says that he will control them. That means I don't need to be in control. It means that he will lead and guide them. So I don't need to actually mark out every step of their life. That he will convict them. So I don't need to always drop the hammer on them. If they have the Holy Spirit, then I don't need to be the Holy Spirit in the life of my child. So my hope and prayer goal is to have my children meet Jesus and have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit and have faith that the Holy Spirit is also involved in the raising of the child. I mean that one of my kids growing up, they just would be very defiant until I laid hands and prayed over them. And then the Holy Spirit would literally melt their heart and change their disposition. So in

addition, in a law-based home, there's no distinction between sins and mistakes, but in a grace-based home, there is a big distinction between sins and mistakes. Let me explain this to you. In a law-based home, where parents are about performance, punishing what they think is wrong and then rewarding what they think is right. Sometimes they have a hard time differentiating between sins and mistakes. Now let me say this. When children commit sins or they make mistakes, it's still an inconvenience and a frustration to the parents. But a sin is a breaking of God's law. And a mistake is simply being a human being. I'll explain this to you. So the Bible says in Luke chapter two, that Jesus, though he was perfect, never sin. And he was a child, says he grew in wisdom, stature favor with men and God. You know what that means is he learned through trial and error and process. Here's the big idea. It's not a sin to be human. So, when you're raising kids, they're gonna do things that may frustrate you. But if they don't frustrate God, then maybe you shouldn't be frustrated. I'll give you an example. So, I get in trouble a lot. One of the times I got in the most trouble, I was talking about this issue with Jesus as a child some years ago, became a news story and I got misrepresented and it was fun. So I'll try and do a better job this time. But so when Jesus was little, let's say he got a bike. Let's say he was a kid who got a bike. Do you think when he got on the bike, no training rails, he just sped off, knew immediately how to ride it perfectly drove to the local BMX track, did a 360, landed the dismount, you think? Or do you think he learned how to ride a bike like you learned how to ride a bike. Wobble, wobble, wobble, fall over. If kids learn how to ride a bike and they fall over, is that a sin or a mistake? It's mistake. It's not like in first and second cycling, there's this forbidding of falling off your bike. It's not in there. So at some point, does every child spill their drink? Everyone. Every, every night. Okay, we're praying for you brother. A little inner healing. Two words, sippy cup. Just pray about it. Just pray about it. So when a kid spills their drink, but they didn't mean to, is that a sinner or mistake? It's a mistake. That's what kids do. You know? So when a kid's learning how to walk, they stumble and they fall. And then they stumble and they fall, and that's how they learn how to walk. What happens in a law-based environment, the goal is on perfection. Now we start disciplining children for being human and it discourages them. It discourages them. And what it does, it keeps them from learning, maturing and growing. Because if they get punished for mistakes, then they're never gonna mature because they have to always do it right the first time or face punishment. Some of you grew up in those homes. You're like, I got busted for things that God isn't upset about. And ultimately at the end of the day, there's a big difference between sins, which is violating God's word and mistakes, which is being human. You know, if Jesus played little league baseball, the first time he got up to bat, I don't think he knew, you know how to hold the bat, how to load the weight, how to finish through the zone. And I don't think first time-- I mean, otherwise they would've known that Jesus was God, right? Of course he's God, that kid hits a home run every single time since T-ball. The way a kid learns how to hit little league, first thing they do-- So here's a plate. First thing a kid does, they put a foot on each side of the plate and they put the bat over their head, which is suicidal. So the first thing the coach does is, "No, get over here." And you always put your hands upside down until somebody tells you how to put your hands. And then you're taught how to hit. Jesus Christ was fully God, fully man, but he was fully human. And he grew in wisdom, stature, in favor. He learned by figuring it out. In a law-based home, you always have to do everything perfect. And what I would say is, it's okay to be human. We all make

mistakes. We learn as we go. And if they commit a sin, that's different. We need to deal with that. But if it's a mistake, we don't discipline them for a mistake. My kids all the time, growing up, they learn this. They're like, "Dad, that wasn't a sin, that was a mistake." Just so you know, kids are very little attorneys. And if you give them this category, they're going to negotiate deal terms on everything. So my kids be like, "Dad, wasn't a sin was a mistake." I'd be like, "No, actually that was a sin." Like, ah, but good try though. You know, so-- But it's important to go, "You know what? "Hey, everybody makes mistakes. "It's okay. "I love you. "That's how we figure it out. "I'm sure you'll learn next time." In addition, in a law-based home, parents add to God's laws. In a grace-based home, God has laws, but parents have rules. This is really important. God has laws. You want to teach your kids to obey God's laws. Amen. If you're a parent, if you're a Christian parent, in addition to God's laws though, do the parents have the right to make some rules? Yeah. Make some rules. Hey, take your shoes off when you come in the house. You gotta go to bed, you gotta do your homework. No, you can't do that to the dog. You can't. You can't. I know the Bible doesn't say anything about how to treat a dog, but that's not good. That's not good. You make some rules. What happens in a law-based environment? Parents will take God's word and they will add their rules and they'll put them together. And sometimes what they'll do, they'll misquote the Bible and they'll weaponize it. And it confuses the kids. Some of you grew up in religious homes where your parents had a lot of rules and they told you, it's what God said. And then you got older. You read the Bible, you're like, "That's all it says. "You guys are making stuff up." Proverbs 35:6 says, "Don't add to God's word." And it doesn't mean that parents don't have authority and they can't make rules. But it's really important to tell the kids, "Hey, that's God's law." Now that's our rule. That's our rule. The Bible does say honor and obey your mother and father. So we do have some rules, but I want you to know, between our rules and God's laws, our rules matter, God's laws really matter. And we don't want to confuse the two, we don't want to confuse the two. 'Cause then what the child will do, they will grow up and see nothing but control, religious hypocrisy and manipulation from their parents. And they will hate the Bible. You don't want them to hate the Bible. You want them to love the Bible. In addition, in a law-based home, the focus is external. In a grace-based home, the focus is internal. In a law-based home it's like, "Hey, people are watching. "What are people gonna think? "Hey, we're supposed to be good Christians. "We're supposed to set an example." No, it's the heart. It's the internal. See the Bible says that life comes out of the heart. And ultimately, if there's a problem out here, we don't want them to fake it and look better. We want to deal with the heart so that they get better. You're angry, what's going on in there? You're really sad, what happened? Right? You're so stubborn and rebellious. What's going on? Once you get to the heart, then as things are changed in here, things will start to change out there. But in a law-based home that is religious, it's all about appearance. "Hey, you need to look right. "You need to sound right. "You need to act right. "People are watching." And sometimes even in ministry, we put a lot of pressure on the pastor's kids or the leader's kids, "Hey, you need to set an example." You're five. You don't have to be an example. You get to be a kid. Just like everybody else. And you don't need to pretend like you're Jesus, 'cause you're not. You need Jesus. Some of you grew up in homes where there was so much emphasis on the outside. What clothes do you wear? How do you look? How do you perform? Some parents, it's like they don't even live for God. They live for social media. "All right, kids make it look perfect. "Let's lie.

"So that we're a good example." God's like, "Actually that's a bad example." Right? How about this one, in a law-based home, the pressure is to work for love. In a grace-based home, it's a pleasure to work from love. In a law-based home, the love of the parent is at the finish line. That's why some people are like, "My parents never told me they love me." Well, apparently it's at the finish line. You haven't gotten there yet. Or it's like, "Man, you know, I did love you, "but now I'm so disappointed. "So you're gonna have to work hard to get my love back." No, you work from love, not for it. It's interesting, when Jesus started his ministry, the father speaks from heaven, says, "This is my son in whom I am well pleased." And the question is, what has he done? Nothing. He hasn't even started his ministry yet. It's not like the father waits until the end when he is risen from the dead and said, "Now I love him and I'm pleased with him." He says at the beginning, "I love him. "And I'm pleased with him." You don't work for love. You work from love. You start with love for the kid. "Hey, I love you. "Give it your best. "If you do great, awesome. "If not, awesome. "Either way, you and me, "ain't gonna change based upon your performance." Pressure's off. Go do your best. In a law-based home, I work for God. In a grace-based home, as we said, God works for in and through me. And here's the big idea. In a law-based home, there's not a lot of laughter. There's not a lot of fun. In a grace-based home, there's lots of laughter. There's a lot of fun. So these two sons come forth. Ishmael-- If you know the story of Genesis, says that he would be a wild donkey of a man. How many of you do not enjoy wild donkeys, right? Any of you? You're like, "I love wild donkeys. "I like it when they bump me with their head "and kick me and bite me. "I just love that. "I used to have bunnies, "but I got rid of all of them for wild donkeys." Nobody thinks that. If you raise a child in a law-based home, they're probably gonna grow up and they're not gonna be very enjoyable. You're not gonna really-- You're not like, "Oh I love them. "We have fun, we laugh. "We make memories. "It's so awesome." It's like, "Ah, they keep kicking me." Isaac's name means laughter. You get to enjoy him, have a little fun. And I'm not saying that parenting isn't hard work, but we've got five kids, two married, this fall two in college and one in high school who's still home. I am happy to report, they're a lot of fun. I mean, my kids know this. I love them and I like them. We laugh, we have fun, we make memories. I just got home from a trip with my son last night, we had a great time. Like, I actually like my kids and we have fun and there's laughter. And so what happens in a religious home, the whole goal is to have perfect kids, which you will never have. So you keep pressuring them. In a grace-based home, the goal is that there's grace for them. There's grace for you. And you can enjoy one another, laugh a little bit, lighten up, have a little fun. You don't need to be perfect. And ultimately at the end of the day, what it means to be mature is to have the fruit of the Spirit, which is love and joy. And enjoy one another. What kind of home did you grew up in? What kind of home environment do you have? And then let me give you three kinds of parents from the story. Law-based parents are like Hagar. Fear, punishment, reward. And what law-based parenting and environment creates, it's very serious. It's very serious. So I'll give you two examples from Trinity Church. This was a while ago and I'll change some of the details. So I'm not revealing someone. But we had a family leave the church and they wanted to let me know why. Said we're leaving, and they had kids. So why are you leaving? They said it's not serious. And the children's ministry is not serious enough. I started laughing. I was like, "It's not serious?" I was like, "What do you mean?" They're like, "We believe that children should go to church "and be in a more serious environment." I was like, what are you-- Well, can we poll

the kids? I said, "Well, what do you mean?" They said, "Well, yeah, "there's Bible reading and there's prayer "and there's worship. "But then they go outside "and once you guys got the water slides and the squirt guns, "that shouldn't be a church." So I was like, "I've gotten in trouble for a ton of things. "Water slides is totally new." So in Arizona, if you're new here, during the summer, it gets really hot. So we put up water slides and squirt guns and misters and popsicles and little kids come to church in their swimsuits. Okay? And if you're religious, you're like, "Oh, that's terrible." And if you're a kid, you're like, "Praise the Lord." Okay? And the parent was upset because the kids would end their kids' ministry going down water slides, squirt guns, popsicles. Yeah. And I said, "So you're leaving?" They said, "Yeah, we need to find a more serious environment." I said, you know, I said, no-- I said, actually, "I love you." I said, "But I don't think you understand the heart of God." The Bible says that heaven is the Father's house. I think-- And ultimately when we get there, we're gonna like being there. And when Jesus was on the earth, kids ran to him. Not because they really admired his seriousness. But because he was grace-based and fun and they liked him and he liked them. I said, "We want kids to not only hear about the grace of God. "We want them to experience a little bit of God's grace." That God likes you. God wants to laugh with you and have fun with you. And he's a good God. And his heart is for you. So sadly, they left. And let me say this, people come here all the time, like, "We need to be serious." Here's what I think. We should take God seriously, but not ourselves. I take God seriously, but not me. The other environment is not a law-based home, but a grace-based home, this is represented by Sarah. In a grace-based home, more peace, more love, more fun, more laughter, more memories, more making plans. We're having a good time. And I'll give you an example from-- I was recently on campus and a mother came up to me with a beautiful, cute little girl, maybe two years old. And the mother saw me and she just started crying. She's like, "We just moved here from this state "that has been in lockdown for about two years. "My little girl has no memory of ever going to church "or children's ministry 'cause our church was closed. "We moved here and this is the first time "she has any memories of going to church." She said, "We didn't know what would happen. "We showed up." She's like, "There's bouncy houses. "There's toys. "There's games." She's like, "This is our daughter's only experience of church." And she said, "My daughter was telling us that swimsuit summer is coming. "Is that true?" That's not a false prophecy. That's actually coming. I said, "Oh yeah, you're gonna need a swimsuit and a towel. "And there's gonna be slides and squirt guns and popsicles." She starts crying. She says, "My daughter wakes up every day "and asks is it church day?" She said, "My daughter really wants to go to church." And she said, "Now we're reading. "She wants to read the kid's story Bible. "And she wants to pray. "She does love Jesus now. "But she's really excited. "She's got friends. "She's making memories." Said, "So I come to women's on Wednesdays. "She's ready to go." I said, well we got date night coming this summer. Date night. You just moved here, you don't have any family or friends. Date night, we're gonna watch your kids and they're gonna have fun and you're gonna go have dinner and then go home. And then you're gonna have fun. So that's date night, all right. She said, "Thank you for creating an environment "where my kids want to come to church." And they're having fun. Making memories, making friends. Yes. Amen. Amen. Then lastly, some homes are law and grace. So what happened in Abraham's home, he had two wives. Hagar law-based, Sarah grace-based. What was that household like? Not good, nightmare. How many of you grew up in a home? Don't raise your

hand. One of the parents was law-based, one was grace-based. And how many of you grew up in the home, and you knew who to ask? You're like, "Okay, my sibling did something nasty. "I'm gonna go tell mom, 'cause mom, law-based." "I want more ice cream, I'm going to dad, "dad, grace-based." And so you would figure out who to engage parentally, 'cause you knew what the outcome would be. And how many of you, you would put mom against dad, that divide and conquer strategy. You're that little attorney. Hey mom, dad, you let him fight. Then they're distracted and you go do what you want, right? What he's saying is this. You can't have law and grace in the same household. Okay? Ultimately it just leads to a lot of conflict and a lot of division. Let me just close with this. We all grew up in a home. We all have a couple of options when it comes to a kind of home we will have. You could just say and do what your parents did. Just be just like your parents. And if your parents are involved in your life and still push you, they're gonna push you to be just like them. You can overreact. Whatever your parents did, do the opposite. My parents were, you know, legalistic, King James only. So I'm gonna smoke weed and be a hippie, like I'm just gonna overreact. Or my parents were hippies. So I gotta find a King James Bible and a suit, right? I'm gonna overreact. Or you can look at your family of origins and say, okay, that was good, that was bad. And you can harvest that which is good. And then you can correct that which is bad. And you can make adjustments for your own household. And I just wanna speak to those who are more law-based, briefly. The reason that you tend to prefer the law is because you love your children, because you want the best for them. You don't want them to be hurt or harmed like you were. If you show me your legalism, I'll show you your pain. What happens is, in our life, sometimes things happen to us and they really hurt. And then we have kids and we're like, I never want that to happen to them. 'Cause I love them so much. And I want to encourage you, your heart is good. So then what we think is, so if you have an unhealed hurt, what you then create is an inner vow. That'll never happen to my kid. That'll never ever happen. An inner vow leads to an outer legalism, a law. A law. So maybe your parents were way too high control, way too demanding, way too overbearing. So you're like, you know what? I'm not gonna discipline my kids and I'm not gonna lead them. I'm just gonna give them total freedom. That's not a good idea. Some of you're like my parents gave me so much freedom and I made a lot of bad choices and I got into a lot of trouble. So then you double down on lots of legalism, rules and control. Most people who are law-based parents really love their kids, but they have something that's unhealed and it comes out. And what they think is, I need to protect my children, but here's what happens. Hear me. I love you. Hear me. You're the one who hurts them. You prevent other people from hurting them, but you hurt them. Too much control, too much pressure, too much fear, too many rules. It's too much. There's not enough room for them to breathe and grow in the grace of God. And if you hear this and you're feeling bad, here's the good news. There's not just grace for your kid. There's grace for their parent. 'Cause you're not just their parent, you're His kid. He has grace for you, so that you can have grace for them. And when we parent our kids, it reveals a lot about our relationship with God and how we view God. And it's not just an opportunity for us to raise our child. It's an opportunity for God to raise us as his child. God loves you. He wants to have fun with you. He likes you. He likes hanging out with you. He enjoys getting to know you. He sees a difference between sins and mistakes. He's not looking to drop the hammer. He's there to help. I'm gonna bring my wife, Grace, up and we're gonna have a brief conversation. And then go ahead and dedicate some

cute kids. Would you like to see some cute kids? This is my wife, Grace. Hey baby. So we've got-- You can tell them about the kids.

- We have five kids.

- Three boys, two girls. Thank you for being an incredible mother. One of the things you learn when you have kids as a man, is even a good father is a terrible mother. And you're an incredible mother. When we first got kids, would you say that you were more law? Where were we in the law and grace?

- I was law and you were grace.

- Which is weird, 'cause your name is Grace. I would've expected that you would've been grace.

- I didn't know my name yet.

- So why were you more law-based and why was I more grace-based.

- Basically what you just explained. I had a lot of pain. I didn't want that to happen to my kids. And so I overprotected and put a lot of rules into place so that they wouldn't get hurt, but then I ended up hurting them.

- And then I kind of over-- You can explain that kind of how I overreacted and overcompensated.

- You don't like to discipline them at all.

- But I was a fun dad.

- Yes. And I was the overbearing mother. Which wasn't fun for me.

- Yeah, well, I apologize. And I'm glad we're doing this live on the internet, so. Well for you as a mother, when they were little, what was that like, just trying to keep order and just keep them all safe?

- It was a lot. I mean, I think with each one I added more rules because it was just a lot. It was chaos.

- By the fifth--

- Yeah. But, I think my expectation going into being a mom, somehow I thought I had to know everything. And I think the number one thing as a mom that I wish I had known is that I have to be teachable and I am learning right along with them. And if I don't depend on the Holy Spirit to teach me so that I can teach them, I'm gonna be a failure as a mom because I put expectations

on them to be mature and perfect. And that's just not even possible.

- Each kid is different.

- Exactly.

- So you're like, okay, this worked, we're gonna do it for all. You know, it didn't work for that kid.

- Yep.

- And so parenting is custom tailoring discipleship and leadership for each child.

- Yep.

- What helped you get out of more of the law-based and into more of a grace-based relational parenting model?

- Probably understanding God's forgiveness for me. And then it helped me to be more gracious with the kids and not be unforgiving of their mistakes and sins and drawing them out differently. And so as they started to get sneaky with their sin, I realized it was 'cause they were afraid of the consequences that were not fair for them and because it was for sin and mistakes. And so as I learned that, I realized, okay, this needs to be me developing the relationship with them, helping them understand the same grace that God gives me and then, you know, correcting out of that.

- So I mean, we've fixed it, now we're perfect. We're perfect parents, we've nailed everything in the last decade, but when the kids were little-- No, we're not even close. But when the kids were little and you were more law-based and I was more grace-based, how did that bit of division between us and our parenting styles actually start to create divisions with the kids?

- Well, they manipulated it, but it created division with us because then we didn't agree with how we were handling situations that would come up. And so then resentment comes in and yeah, it's fun.

- Well, and then some of the kids were more law-based, so they would side with you and some were more grace-based and they would side with me. And then even a division in our parenting style can lead to division among the kids.

- Well, and the compliant ones liked the rules 'cause then they were good kids.

- Yeah, no they were. Yeah. Yeah.

- But then they didn't have emotional health because they were really good at obeying rules, but

not emotionally--

- With the heart, yeah.

- So then I had to repent to that and help that.

- Any encouragement for the mothers who are hearing these categories on Mother's Day?

- Yeah. I think these are really important categories to really honestly and humbly assess as women as moms, and to just be honest with the Lord and repent where we need to and repent with our kids. Kids are so incredibly forgiving and I've had to do this with my kids at all ages and it's hard. It breaks my heart, the things that I unintentionally did to hurt my kids. And then they felt unloved by me. That's never what we wanna communicate as moms, but it can happen. You know, when we get in our rhythms that aren't healthy. And so for me, I'm so thankful that God forgave me from those ways and that my kids have forgiven me and that we can now have conversations even with, you know, as they're older just saying, "Yeah, I felt in that way and I'm sorry." And they're so gracious with that. And now when they go to raise their kids, they'll have some of those tools because I wasn't a perfect mom and they won't be perfect parents. And so, knowing that God is gracious with them, like he was with me is key to their adult lives and parenting.

- For those that have littles. Now that our kids are a little older. Is it possible or do you really enjoy your adult kids?

- Oh, absolutely. And that's the relational bit that you talked about, building that relationship so that you can continue to have a relationship with them in their older years. It's incredible. We love our kids and we just have so much fun with them. So I'm thankful for that. It's a gift.

- Cool. Happy Mother's Day. Could you pray for them all, sweetie pie?

- Dear Lord, thank you so much that you give us grace first and you give us the gift of forgiveness. And I just pray that we would seek that first as moms from you so that we can extend that to our kids. Thank you that children are a blessing and they are a lot of work, but they are a blessing. And Lord, I just pray that you would strengthen the moms in the room to raise their kids, to love you and enjoy you so that they can also enjoy their kids. Lord, give them patience, give them kindness, give them just strength from the Holy Spirit for each day. Give them wisdom as they're training up these kids in Jesus's name. Amen.

- Amen.