

Links in the Chain of Faith

- Howdy, Pastor Mark here with Real Men, and this week, something a little different. Doing a little prerecord. Kids are on spring break, so I'm gonna go get a little bit of family time, but really excited about what I get to share this week, and if you're new, either in the room or online, the way it works is we tend to go through books of the Bible. Right now, I'm in Genesis, and then we get together for Real Men and we look at leadership lessons for men. And Genesis is really an incredible book, one of the best books in the whole Bible, to raise up, to train, to encourage, to equip men, 'cause it's one generation to the next, father, son, father, son, father, son. In many ways, it's a study in family dynamics over the course of generations. And so, looking back on Genesis, Jesus has something really interesting to say, and the whole point of Genesis is to bring forth Jesus Christ from this family line through Abraham to be the savior of the nations. And once Jesus does come, he has this interesting statement in Matthew 22:32. He said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Here's Jesus telling us who God is. He says the God of the Bible is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that's where we really find ourselves now in the book of Genesis. The story kind of went from Noah and his sons to Abraham and his sons, and, of course, it started with Adam and his sons. So it goes Adam and his sons, leapfrogs many generations to Noah and his sons, leapfrogs many more generations to Abraham and his sons, and that's where we find ourselves. And looking back, Jesus says, "I'm the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." You probably know this, but if you don't, it's helpful. This is a man with his son and his grandson. This is three generations of a family, all worshiping the same God, and it shows that the hope, prayer, and goal is that every generation of your family would know, love, serve, follow, trust Jesus Christ, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And so, ultimately, what we're looking at here is that God likes to think in terms of legacy, so we need to think in terms of legacy. God tends to think generationally, so we need to think generationally. And this is really helpful for a man, because, oftentimes, when we go to make decisions, if we factor in our wife, our kids, our grandkids, our legacy, it changes the decisions we would make. If we only consider ourselves, we're probably gonna make a bad decision that has negative implications for other generations. And so, what we're seeing in Genesis is this theme of blessing and cursing is a really dominant one. About 80 times or so, Genesis speaks of blessing. It's the book of the Bible that speaks of blessing more than any other book of the Bible, and the counterbalance, or the opposite, of being blessed is being cursed. And we're gonna see, in every family, a guy has some sons and those sons make some decisions to either be blessings or cursings, and that blessing or cursing goes for generations. I'll give you an example of this. Probably the greatest Bible teacher/theologian, theos is God and logos is study, so when we say the theology, it's a big word that just means the study of God. The best theologian in our nation's history, the most famous and respected, is a man named Jonathan Edwards, and he was part of the Great Awakening and God used him in significant ways. But, really, one thing that makes his life unique, he had a big family, a lot of kids, but he would get up every day and he would pray for five generations of his family. Pray for his kids, his grandkids, his great grandkids, his great great grandkids, his great great great grandkids, every day, praying for five generations of his family. And biographers and historians have sort of examined his legacy, and here's what they've found. From Jonathan Edwards comes one United States vice president, one dean of a law school, one dean of a medical

school, three United States senators, three state governors, three city mayors, 13 different college presidents, 30 judges, 60 doctors, 65 college professors, 75 military officers, 80 people holding public offices of various sorts and kinds, 100 lawyers. I don't know if that's good or bad, but 100 lawyers, 100 clergymen, or pastors and missionaries, and 285 college graduates. That's the five generations that he prayed for. At the same time, roughly speaking, there was another man who lived. He was roughly an equivalent or a contemporary of Jonathan Edwards. His name was Max Jukes, and they realized as they were sort of doing intake to the New York prison system, that there 42 men who were descendants of him that were all in the New York State Penitentiary at the same time. And so, there was a historian, or a person who did the research, and did so looking at his ancestry and his history. So Richard Dugdale, a sociologist in 1877, tried to figure out, okay, who descended from this man and what is that legacy? He found that there were seven murderers, 60 thieves, 190 prostitutes, 150 miscellaneous other convicts convicted for crimes, 310 paupers, meaning they're living in complete and total abject poverty, 440 who were wrecked by alcohol addiction, and of the 1200 descendants that were studied, 300 died a premature death from unnatural causes. So the point is this: Ultimately, you don't just make decisions for yourself, you make decisions for your legacy. And here at Trinity, we like to say we open our Bibles to learn, we open our lives to love, so that lives and legacies are transformed. And that legacy piece is really on full display in Genesis. God will get a man, change his life, and then God will bless that man and his family line, changing their legacy. So what I wanna talk to you about is, truly speaking, think of it like links on a chain. And this is how men should think about our family and our generations and our genealogy. And I want you to see that it's the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What he's talking about, there is three links in a chain is what Jesus is referring to. He's saying there was a dad who loved me and then a son who loved me and then a grandson who loved me, so I wanna share this with you. There really are four kinds of men. There's the first link in the chain. Some of you guys are the first link in the chain, meaning you're the first Christian in your family, or maybe the first male Christian in your family. Maybe you were raised by a single mom and dad wasn't in the picture. You didn't really know him. Mom knew Jesus. Maybe you're the first Christian in your family or you're the first Christian man in your family, first head of household who knows and loves Jesus. Well, what you're gonna have is a lot of bad habits to break, because it's just generations of foolishness or evil. Some of you are gonna have a lot of pressure from your extended family, saying, hey, don't change. Be true to your family. This is how we've always been. This is how we do it. And there's gonna be a lot of pressure from family to revert back to the failed family system. And if you're the first link in the chain, you need to know that you're probably going to get more demonic spiritual attack and opposition, why? Because you're changing an entire legacy for a family. You're becoming the first link in a new chain, meaning people who came before you, they lived a certain way, and now people after you are gonna live a different way, and so there's gonna be a lot of enemy attack trying to get you to revert back to the family of origins rather than act out as a member of the family of God. Well, the next link in the chain is there are strong links. The strong links are, you're not the first link, but you're strong. You love the Lord. You know the Lord. You're devoted to the Lord. You're committed to the Bible. You're here at Real Men going to church. You're trying to read God's word, worship, pray, love your wife, raise your kids, like your heart is I know what God says and that's what I want to do, so the

want to is there, and I'm trying to figure out how to. The strong links are not perfect men, but they're godly men, and they're men who know and love and serve the Lord, and they seek by the grace of God to do what is right. There are guys in the Bible that are strong links that we all know of. A first link is a guy like Abraham, strong links are guys like Daniel or Nehemiah. They came from Bible-believing, God-loving families, but they're strong, strong, strong links in the chain. They're not gonna break. Their kids, their grandkids, their great grandkids can depend on them, and they're faithful to God. The third is the weak links. These guys are believers. They do know the Lord, but they're not doing so good. This would be, for example, the prodigal son in the New Testament. He's the guy who, when given an opportunity, he's still loved by his father, but he runs away from home. He blows his inheritance. He goes to Vegas. He hires strippers. He gets a lot of addiction and everything he puts on social media's violating one of God's Ten Commandments. He's not doing good. And the problem is, if you are a weak link for too long, eventually, you become a broken link. Think of it like you're trying to pull somebody out of the ditch. You're offroading. You throw a chain between maybe your rig and theirs. If there's a weak link in the chain, too much pressure over too much time, eventually, it becomes a broken link. So if you're one of those guys who is a weak link in the chain, my encouragement to you would be this. You really do need to get welded up. You need to get strengthened and solidified. That's repenting of your sin, seeking wise counsel, being honest with the guys around the table, really doing what the guy in the story of the prodigal son did, and that is leaving the foolish, rebellious, self-destructive, shortsighted choices that you're making, saying, you know what? I need to get back to my father. I need to get back to the way things should be and the way that God created me to be. And that picture there of him returning to the father is really a picture of the weak link in the chain, sons returning to God, the Father, and to spiritual fathers for spiritual fathering to get welded up. 'Cause if your link breaks, your wife, your kids, your grandkids, generations, they are now unlinked from the history of faith and God's faithfulness to and through your family. You don't want that. It is better to live a hard life with God's blessing than an easy life without God's blessing. Many times we think, well, what will feel good or what would be easiest? And the question needs to be what is God's will for me? And just find God's will and stick in it. And sometimes, the guys who are weak links in the chain, they're looking for an easy path when there isn't one. They're looking for a pleasing or a comfortable path, and that usually leads to sin and death. Or there was so much blessing on their life, on their family, on their parents, on their dad and mom, that they've sort of taken God's grace for granted. They're like, yeah, my parents love the Lord and they love me and they're generous, and we grew up knowing the Lord. And you just kind of take it all for granted. If you're a weak link in the chain, spend some time with guys who didn't come from the kind of background that you did and don't have the blessings and benefits. The guy who says, yeah, I never met my dad or my dad beat the heck out of us or my relatives died of addiction and my family was in a lot of pain, and say, you know what? I should have an attitude of gratitude for the family I was born into. Maybe my parents weren't perfect. Maybe they were a little religious. Maybe they were a little non-relational. Maybe they were a little strict, but the truth is I did better than pretty much everybody else that I know, and I have a lot to be grateful for and I don't need to be the weak link in the chain. If I have a problem with my family, my parents, what I need to be is a strong link in the chain, so maybe I take the good things that they did and I continue them and I take the bad things that they did and I discontinue

them, so that that line of faith gets stronger in my family. Well, then, the fourth link in the chain, so there's the first link, the strong link, the weak link, and then there's the broken link. And the broken link is the guy who says, you know what? I come from a family of faith, but it is going to come to an end with me. This is the guy who grows up in a Christian family and decides I'm not going to church. I'm not reading the Bible. I'm not praying. I'm not walking with God. This whole Jesus journey ends with me. It stops here. Sometimes he makes this as a conscientious decision and this is just rebellion, and sometimes it's out of church hurt. Sometimes he had legalistic or religious, rule-based, non-relational parents, and he sort of rejects it altogether rather than pulling out that which is good and rejecting that which is evil. And the Bible says to cling to that which is good and to reject that which is evil. You don't just take it or leave it. You sift through it and say, well, this was good and this was bad. And that was biblical and that was religious. And that was of the Holy Spirit and that was fear and tradition, and sift through it. But if you don't do that, you could just reject everything, and then you become a broken link in the chain. And this is the guy who, his parents love the Lord, or his dad loves the Lord or his mom loves the Lord and they go to church and they pray, and he does not and he will not. And he's like, it ends with me. And then, that whole side of the family, once that guy is married and has kids and grandkids, the whole family's divided. It's like, here's the believers, here's the unbelievers. Here's the family that's gonna go to church together and pray together, and here's the side of the family that won't. And it's the broken link in the chain. And so, with these categories in mind, I want to look at a couple of generations in the book of Genesis, and we're gonna look at the father who is the first link in the chain, and then his sons and what kinds of links in the chain they are. And I give this to you for a perspective as a man to see that what happens in Genesis is not just what happened, but it's what always happens. And it's gonna happen in your life and it's gonna happen in your family and it's gonna happen with your legacy, and you need to be aware of that so you can lead through that. So let's start with, as a case study, Adam. He had a son named Abel. Abel was a strong link in the chain. I'm just sort of surveying where we've been generationally in legacy thus far in Genesis. So Abel loved the Lord, strong link in the chain. So Adam is the first link in the chain. He's the first man, so he is the first link in the chain, and he's got a relationship with God. Then he becomes a weak link in the chain. He sins against God. He rebels against God. He hides from God. He blames his wife. He subtly blames his God for his situation. He doesn't take full responsibility and ownership, so he's the first link in the chain, and then he becomes a weak link in the chain. And then he has sons. His first two sons are Cain and Abel. Well, Abel is a strong link in the chain. If you remember the story, he loves the Lord. He worships the Lord. He gives generously, and then, Cain, his brother, is a broken link in the chain. Cain murders his brother, Abel. If you remember the story, they go into the presence of God together. This is like going to church, and they bring in their hands an offering, and Cain has murder and anger and jealousy and bitterness in his heart, and so he takes Abel out of sight. He's thinking God's not watching. When we sin, we get foolish. We forget that God sees and knows everything. And he murders Abel, and then, when God confronts him, he sort of changes the subject and he's like, well, am I my brother's keeper? Am I his babysitter? Am I his designated driver? I don't know where he's at. I don't know what happened. It's not my responsibility. So then Abel is the broken link in the chain. He has murdered his only brother. He has lied to his God and he is cursed. He is under a curse

because of his behavior. He's gonna be sent east. He's gonna be a wanderer. People are gonna be against him. His life is gonna be hard, because his heart is hard. Sometimes when you have a hard life, it's 'cause you have a hard heart, and that's the story with Cain. So, now, God had two sons, Cain and Abel, and now Cain kills Abel, so the only potential line for legacy and lineage is Cain. So then God raises up Seth. He gives Adam and Eve a third son, and he becomes a strong link in the chain. And it tells us in Luke 3:38 that Jesus Christ came through the line of Seth. You know, perhaps could have come through the line of Abel, but he got murdered. Couldn't come through the line of Cain, 'cause he's evil. So then God raises up Seth and Seth is a strong link in the chain that carries forth faith until the coming of Jesus Christ. So here you have a father who started as a strong chain, became a weak chain. You have a son who was a strong chain and became the first martyr in the New Testament. You have a son who is a broken link in the chain, and then another son who is a strong link in the chain and God works to bless through him. If you jump forward, then, we looked also at Noah and his family, and Noah, like Adam, had three named sons, Ham, Japeth, and Shem. And so, Noah, again, is the first link in the chain. It says that there were no believers. I mean, it's incredible to think about, but Peter tells us that Noah preached for 120 years, and apparently there were no converts except for his wife, his three sons, and their three wives. Eight people in total, we are reminded by Peter, enter into the ark and are spared through judgment. Everybody else dies. Nobody else trusts in the Lord and walks with the Lord. So Noah is the first link in the chain. He's the first believer. He starts strong. He trusts God. He preaches and he prepares the ark for 120 years, then he gets off and he worships God with an altar and a sacrifice. He's a strong link. Then he gets drunk and passes out naked in his tent, so he's a strong link, but he has some weak link days. He has three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japeth, and Ham is the broken link in the chain. Ham is the son who, when his dad got drunk, naked, passed out in his tent, Ham is the guy who went in to look at his dad, and, you know, pun somewhat intended, the bare details are all we know. We don't know, was he lusting? Did he assault him? Was he mocking him, like what, why was he there? We don't know. We just know that, when Noah awoke, he was angry and furious, and so, what he did, he cursed not Ham his son, and, actually, I don't think he cursed. He just said that there was a curse. So he didn't, you and I can't curse people. God can, but he's pronouncing that there is a curse, and the curse wasn't just on Ham, but on his son, Noah's grandson, Canaan, Canaan. So Ham is a broken link in the chain, and then Canaan is just like his dad. And so, if you think of it in this way, here's Noah, he loves the Lord. His son, Ham, broken link in the chain, new family line, new legacy, new spirit. This is demonic and evil. And so, then a curse goes on Ham's son, Canaan, and the Canaanites, throughout the Bible, are the most ungodly people. The descendants of Canaan, they're into child sacrifice. They're into cult sexuality. They build high places for all kinds of debauchery. These are the worst people. These are the people in the Old Testament that God keeps telling His people don't marry them. Don't have kids with them. Don't do business with them. Don't weld together with them, right? Don't put these two links together. You're not gonna save them. They're gonna destroy you. So Ham is the broken link in the chain. In addition, there is also Japeth, and he's a strong link in the chain. He doesn't get as much airplay, but he does know and love the Lord, and his family line comes under Shem's, and they kind of work together, but they are believers. And then, Shem is the strong link in the chain. That son is the one who has the most faith and

the most consistent walk with God. They've all got their problems. We all do. There's no such thing as a perfect man, woman, father, mother, son, daughter, or generation. But what happens through the line, ultimately, of Shem, we're told in Luke 3:36 that Jesus Christ came through the line of Shem, through the line of Shem. And it's almost a repeat of Noah. He had one broken link and two strong links, Adam did, and now, here, Noah does. These three named sons, one broken link, two strong links. Well, that brings us up to Abram or Abraham, where we find ourselves in Genesis, and he becomes the real feature focal point from Genesis 11, 12, all the way up through 25. He really becomes that focus, because the promise is given to him that through his seed or his offspring or his lineage would come Jesus to bless and save the nations. So then, Abraham is needing to be, number one, a strong link in the chain, and then, number two, he needs to raise at least one son who is a strong link in the chain, because it's going to be, again, as the Lord, Jesus said, right, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and you just continue through the Old Testament all the way up until John chapter eight, when Jesus comes, and he has an argument with these religious leaders and what they say is, quote, "Our father is Abraham." So from the days of Abraham to the days of Jesus, every generation looks back and says, we are linked into Abraham as our father. And so, ultimately, Jesus tells them, actually, Abraham is not your father, because it's not by birth, but new birth. He was saved by faith, and you're only saved if you have faith. And he says your father is the devil, and so, what he's basically saying is no, no, no. You're part of a broken link and a new family line. And the way they show this forth, they are religious and they murder Jesus, even though they're Jewish, thinking that they're honoring Abraham, their father, Abraham, their father, was trusting in Jesus as savior. The point is this, it's not about just being loyal to your earthly father. It's about being loyal to your Heavenly Father. That's what it's really about. And sometimes people will be very loyal to their earthly father, but they're disloyal to their Heavenly Father. And what Jesus was, he was loyal to his earthly father. He honored his father and mother, but he was loyal to his Heavenly Father. And what he's telling the religious leaders in John 8, you may be a physical descendant of Abraham, but you're not a spiritual descendant. You are loyal to your earthly father, but you're rebellious against your Heavenly Father. That being said, when it comes to Abraham, he's got two sons from two different women, which is too many. First of all, his firstborn son, just by sequencing and timing, is Ishmael. Now, Abraham, again, is the first link of faith in his family. Now, what we know from Joshua, what we know from Acts, I won't get into all of it, is that Abraham's father Terah was a Babylonian from Ur of the Chaldees. It's a Babylonian region, and Joshua says overtly Abraham's father, Terah, worshipped false gods, so he grew up in a godless place called Babylon. His family was probably part of the Tower of Babel and the building of the city of Babylon. They were just those wicked bad guys. His father worshiped demon gods and Abram was the first believer in his family. So he broke off from his father. This is why God tells Abraham, leave your father, leave your homeland, leave your country, meaning you can't carry forth your father's legacy. What he's saying is basically this, Abraham, we're gonna need to start over with you. Your dad can't make the decisions for the God that you worship. Your dad can't make the decisions for the place that you live. Your dad can't make the decisions for how you're gonna raise your family. We need to literally shear and sever that chain, and we need to start over with you, a new man in a new place with a new God doing a new thing. You're the first link in a brand new chain. That's why God tells Abraham to leave his

father and his homeland and his job and his security and his inheritance, leave everything 'cause we gotta start over, first link in the chain. God tells Abraham and Sarah that they're going to give birth to a son and that that son will be bringing forth Jesus, the savior, the blessing of the nations. Abraham is around 75 years of age when he meets the Lord, he gets saved, so he's a late bloomer. His wife, Sarah, we know two things about her. She's beautiful and she's barren, and they have no children. And now they're 75-ish years of age, he is at least. They're beyond childbearing years. God tells them they're gonna have a son. Well, they wait, if memory serves me correct. It's almost around 25 years that they wait. He's around 100 when he gets to give birth to a son with his wife, and what happens in the meantime, they get impatient and they decide that they are going to help God fulfill His promise. Let me say this, God doesn't need our help. We need God's help. God doesn't need our help. So Sarah, of all people, comes up with this crazy idea, why don't you get a handmaiden? Why don't you get a girlfriend? Why don't you get a second wife, a sister wife who's younger? Sleep with her, she'll give you a son, and then our family will have a son, and then that son can be the fulfillment to the promise that was given, that through the son, the nations would be blessed. Abraham, I don't know how this conversation went. Oh, honey, you want me to go sleep with a young gal? Well, you know, I'll do whatever you want me to do. I'm just here to be a good husband and serve my wife. You know, I'll do it for the family. It's a sick thing. So Hagar gets pregnant. She doesn't worship the same God, necessarily, as Abraham and Sarah, and what happens, then, she gives birth to son, and lo and behold, Sarah gets jealous. Of course she does. I mean, there's no woman who watches another woman birth her husband's child when she is barren and is okay with that. And then, of course, Abraham, it's his son. He's never been a dad. He's been waiting his whole life. He's gonna love this son, He's gonna feel close to this woman. It's a lot of baby mama drama. And so, Hagar, she gives birth to Ishmael, and he becomes a broken link in the chain. Today, the Arabs would say that they would see Ishmael as their father. Furthermore, Islam, which tends to be the prevailing religious ideology among most Arabs, they would look at the Old Testament stories in Genesis and they would read it that all the promises that God gave to the offspring or the seed of Abraham should rightfully be given to their biological father, Ishmael, because he was born first. So the whole geopolitical conflict between the Arabs and the Jews, the whole global conflict between Judaism and Christianity, which is an offspring, and Islam is rooted in this, one man slept with two women, brought forth two family lines, and they have been at war ever since. Which one of us earns or should have the right of inheritance as the descendants of Abraham? So, to this day, three major world religions and multiple cults would all say that they trace themselves to Abraham. Muslims would say that Abraham is their father. Jews would say that Abraham is their father, 'cause, again, two wives, two sons. Christians would say that we are, by faith, not by blood, the descendants of Abraham, and those who are in cults, in addition to those three major religions, would include Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and others, who would say that they are descendants of Abraham. So the whole feud is over who is the offspring, the seed of Abraham, and is it by birth or new birth? Is it by blood or is it by faith? Paul in Romans, Galatians, and elsewhere, he's real clear it's not by birth, but by new birth, Abraham didn't start as a Jew. He was actually a Gentile, and he started with faith and that began the Jewish people. But the Jewish people didn't begin with biology, but with faith and not with circumcision, but with faith. The second son born of Abraham is Isaac. This is the son born

through his wife, Sarah. He is a strong link in the faith. As we get a little further, he's willing to even give his life in faith to his God in the faith that God has toward his father. And so, ultimately, Isaac is a strong link in the chain and he becomes the father of the Jewish nation. So these conflicts in the Old Testament that continue to this day, it's two women, each have a son, it's Hagar and Sarah, it's Ishmael and it is Isaac, and Isaac means laughter. And the point is God always gets the last laugh. To this day, there is a whole line that would say that they are the descendants, ultimately, of Abraham. Well, that being said, I want to set you up for some discussions in your groups or online with your friends, but let me just share what this looks like practically. Let's take these categories and concepts and bring them forth. So, for me, my dad, Joe, he's a Christian. He loves the Lord. He starts every day, pretty much, reading his Bible and praying for his kids and his grandkids, so in our family today, my dad is first link in the chain. I didn't know my grandpa very well. He died when I was very young and lived in another state, so I can't speak to where he was at. I don't know. My dad knows the Lord and I love the Lord and I have sons and daughters, three sons and two daughters that love the Lord. So the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in my life would be the God of Joe and Mark, and it would be Zach and Calvin and Gideon, and we're together. And then my daughters know and love the Lord and my kids are all marrying believers to keep that chain nice and strong and linked together. On Grace's side of the family, her dad was perhaps the first Christian in his family, but we call him Grandpa Give, he was a pastor. He loved Jesus. He was a Bible teaching pastor, and Grace's mom loved the Lord as well. My mom loves the Lord as well. So Grace and I both have parents that know and love the Lord and have been married for a really long time. They both made it 50 years, which is amazing. And then, Grace knows and loves the Lord and her two sisters know and love the Lord, and then her kids know and love the Lord. So what we're looking at in our family is three links in the chain, three generations of faith. And then, we don't have grandkids yet, but I'm prophesying that they are coming and I look forward to that. And then we want them to be strong links in the chain. We want every link in the chain to be strong and we want to raise our grandkids to know and love and serve Jesus and to be people of deep and profound faith. I mean, that's the hope, and the hope is that maybe we live long enough to meet our great grandkids and see that they know and love Jesus and strong link of the chain. And then, someday, we're gonna go home to be with the Lord, but I hope that those generations of faith are strong links in the chain and that they continue to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ. That's the hope and the prayer and the goal. And for men, you need to know that most men don't think this way, but as God's men, God thinks this way, and as His men, we need to think this way. And so, for you, here's a couple discussion questions just for your chat time. Number one, which link are you in the chain? Are you the first link? What does that look like? Are you a strong link? And you can be honest. I mean, you can be humble and still be honest. Not a perfect link, but a strong link. Are you a weak link? Like I'm not doing so good. It's not looking so good. Are you a broken link? I've walked away from the Lord. I've abandoned my faith. I need to get welded back in. And then, the second one would be just how can we pray for you, 'cause we do love you and we care for you, and what you'll see around the table, we all come from somewhere. And I would just close with this. If your mom, your dad, your grandma, your grandpa was a strong link in the chain, thank 'em, give 'em a call, text, email, write 'em a letter and just tell them what a blessing they are and were. And even if you didn't have perfect parents, if you had parents that

knew the Lord and tried, you're blessed, and so, let me pray. Father God, thanks for an opportunity to teach, and, God, I pray for the men who are first links in the chain, that they would be strong links and that there'd be many connected to their faith. God, I pray for those who are weak links, that they would get welded up tonight. God I pray for those who are broken links, that they would come back like the prodigal did and get reconnected and fused back into the family of faith. And God, I pray for us all, that we would be strong links in the chain. And, God, I pray especially for the first links in the chain. They're making massive decisions that have generational implications. And so, God, we want to live under your blessing as your sons, and we want to be a source of blessing to our sons and daughters and our grandsons and our granddaughters, in Jesus' good name, amen.