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Presentation Transcript
Faith's Origins
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Good afternoon to all of you. The title of this presentation is *Faith's Origins* – specifically, how our parents pass the faith to us and how we can pass it on to our children and the children of others.

Speaking of the resurrected saints, John writes, under the inspiration of God, in Revelation 17:4:

Revelation 17:4 – *They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for He is the Lord of lords and King of kings. And those with Him are called, chosen and faithful.* We're called, and if we respond to the calling, we're chosen, and if we remain faithful, we get to be there at the end. So faith is a vital part of our victory in Christ.

I want you to think about some of the things God says about faith. Think about Abraham. Why did God call him? Because he was to be the father of the *faithful*, right? So he had to be a faithful man, didn't he? Now there are two meanings there, when you look at that term *father of the faithful*. Spiritually, he's the father of all the faithful, who follow God, even in the church. He's our spiritual father, as well, in that sense. And the other one is, that he would pass the faith of God to his children. Let's go to Genesis 18:18 and look and see what God says about that.

Genesis 18:18 – *...seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He promised.* So, if He's going to do this, He knows that this guy has to be able to raise a good family that is going to follow God. So one of the things He looked for was a man who could pass faith to his kids.

Another thing to think about: you know, we did a series on *The Beatitudes* awhile back, and we said that the first beatitude was the foundation of the whole thing – *poverty of spirit*. And what is that? Well, it's the belief that God knows best, isn't it? It's faith in

God – that God knows best for us, and He’s going to take care of us, and He’s going to meet our needs. That’s what poverty of spirit is.

Paul, himself, said in Hebrews 11 that, without faith, it’s impossible to please God. We *have* to know that He’s a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him – that He’s going to take care of us and that He’s going to meet our needs. Even Jesus said, “Oh you of little faith. Don’t you know that God’s going to take care of you?” So faith is about God meeting our needs. Some people, when they hear that, they want to try to spiritualize, “That’s so selfish – meeting our needs.” Well, if you really think that you’re above that, then you have completely deceived yourself and are off on the planet Pluto. Admit it! You’re clueless – helpless – and you need God! That’s the bottom line for us.

So how does faith develop in us? Or how does *God* develop faith in us? Well, let’s think about two elements. The scripture that I think of, first and foremost, is in Hebrews 4:12. Actually, that’s *not* the first and foremost scripture. This is a preface to it.

Hebrews 4:12 – *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart.* So let me ask you this? If we’re trying to understand something spiritual, why do we have to know about the difference between the joints and the marrow, and the thoughts, and the intents of the heart, and the soul, and the spirit? Why is something physical thrown in there? Joints and marrow. Wouldn’t it just be about thoughts and intents of the heart, and soul and spirit? Well, I think it’s important that, when God thinks about understanding us, and for us to understand ourselves, we not only have to understand soul and spirit, but we also have to understand the physical part and how that interplays with the spiritual.

One of the most interesting things I’ve heard recently, in my reading, is something Daniel Siegel said – the brain researcher. He said, “Just because certain neurons fire in your brain at the same time you’re getting angry, or happy, or sad, that doesn’t mean that one is causing the other, or *visa versa*. You can’t prove the connection. But there is something there that is beyond just neuronal firing.” They know that. At least, he does. There are a lot of these hardcore scientists who don’t really believe in God, I think. They’re not willing to even go to what is an emotion and what is a mind. But he does. And so I think that’s good.

So, to understand human beings, we have to understand the physical side of a person, as well, and how that interplays with all the spiritual things. I’m going to give you an example. I quoted this at the Feast in Sandestin, 2011. It’s in Psalm 22:9. It’s a prophecy about Christ and the thoughts that He had. It says:

Psalms 22:9 – *And yet you are He who took Me from the womb.* This is Jesus, the Man, talking to God, His Father. *You made Me to trust You at My mother’s breasts.* Oh, so He was a physical person.

It's really interesting. Over Thanksgiving, we went to my sister-in-law's house, and she has a daughter, who has an 8-month-old. She's nursing him. And he was very interested in following her around. She was the milk factory, where all good things come from. A lot of us don't like to think about Jesus Christ having that as part of His makeup and His background. It is!

V-10 – *On You I was cast from My birth. And from My mother's womb, You have been My God.* So He knew that His mother had a lot to do with His relationship with God. So He was a human, as well as God. And we are physical human beings, as well as having the law written in our hearts and the Spirit of God. And with Jesus being a human being, much of His attitude and approach came from how He was treated as an infant. Now I wonder if we can wrap our minds around it. It's easier to obey God when we have been brought up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. And it's easier to have faith in God when we have been treated well in early infancy by our mother and our father.

Let's look in Romans 10:14. Now we're getting to the scripture that talks about the spiritual side of things. That's very important. I'm not saying that the only thing that causes us to have faith is how we're brought up in early infancy. I think that's a part of it, but there's more to it than that.

Romans 10:14 – *How then will they call on Him, whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him, who they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach, unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel, for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So – he concludes – faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.* What's another way to say that? Faith is passed from one person to another, whether it's your mother or a minister that you hear on the radio. We learn from other people. The transmission of faith is a relational activity.

My parents passed Christian values to me. I was nurtured and well cared for and doted on, as a child, but they did not pass on to me a body of beliefs out of the scriptures. I had to find my own way there – or, at least, it seemed that way to me when I was looking. Maybe God opened my mind to what He had for me. I think there are two parts to that. We talk all the time about having faith, and reading the Bible, and this scripture. But what we haven't talked about is the part that we get from our parents. We don't understand that too well. And I think that causes us to be very discouraged about what we see happening in the church today, which is a mass exodus, on the part of our young people, from the church.

We know all about the way we learn from preachers, but I want to focus on this other way – the way that we learn from infancy and how our parents pass faith to us from day one – because that has implications for us and our life with our kids and also with the children of other people. How does it work?

Well, the place to start is with the baby in a crib. The baby has a need. It's hungry. It's cold. It's wet. It's lonely. It's whatever. And what does the baby do then? It cries. And what is that cry for? What's that about? It's a communication of need. Right? We get the message when the baby cries – very effective communicator in that way. So then, what do we do? We respond. Right. We love our child and we want to take care of it, right? So we meet the need then, don't we? Normal operating procedure, right? for babies. And what does the baby learn from that? Well, it learns that, "When I cry, when I have a need, the whole world responds to it. I mean, I must be really good! I must be okay!" When that happens, the baby is in the state of, what they call, *regulation* – emotional regulation. Have you ever seen a baby just after it had a bottle and has been changed? It's all happy and everything is good. And that becomes, sort of, the status quo for a child that is treated that way consistently. And the whole brain works together. They say that the core of mental health is the integration of the front and the back of the brain – the emotions and the thinking – the left and the right. And babies learn to be that way when they're taken care of and everything is working for them.

One of the results of that is, as children get older, if they know that they're going to be taken care of, and their basic needs are going to be met, they *trust* their parents. They always have trusted them, from the beginning, because they've been taken care of. There are sometimes when we can't do everything a baby wants, but most of them are resilient enough – if we're on the spot enough – to override those kind of things and they trust us. That's why children will do what we tell them to do when they're little, because they *believe* that we're going to take care of them. We're going to meet their needs – that things work out when they do what they're told.

This is really important. The way that they get what they want is to communicate their needs. The kid puts his hand up in class, and he says, "May I go to the bathroom?" Teachers love kids like that. Or, "May I have a cookie?" Straight-forward, direct response. And that's what has always gotten results before. That's the way it's been for generations in this country. People asked for what they needed. They wanted to cooperate and be respectful of other people. They understood the feelings and the needs of other people, pretty much. What that book the guy wrote about everything I really needed to learn, I learned in kindergarten? You know, don't hit. Stuff like that. They felt relatively good about themselves, at their center, because what was most important early on was taken care of.

But we're seeing more and more, in our society, something else happen. And this can be very instructive for us. Baby is in a crib. It cries. Parents don't respond or they're scary or violent. We see so much of that. The baby's needs are not met. They suffer a severe loss. And what they're learning is that the world is scary and dangerous – maybe life-threatening. And, instead of a *love bond* that they develop with respect and all that for their parents, they develop what's called a *trauma bond*, that's foundation is fear, instead of love. So, when you're like that, when you're very little – you know, you weigh 10 pounds and you're up against a 190-pound father – you are *not* emotionally regulated. You're afraid a lot. You're on high alert. You have a lot of anxiety, because it's always bad when you need something. The less noise you can make and the more out of sight

you can stay, the better it is. So you anticipate a loss all the time when you have needs. You learn that it's dangerous to communicate your needs. Okay?

So, how do these children, as they grow older, learn to get their needs met? The way that the healthy baby that we saw – the way that it worked for generations in our country – doesn't work for these kids. So what do they learn? They find other ways to meet their needs. They learn that it's dangerous to communicate, so they use indirect ways to communicate what they want. If a kid wants attention, maybe they'll hit a sibling, instead of saying, "Can I have a hug?" Or, if they want a hug, maybe they'll bump into an adult. I actually had this happen to me one time. This thirteen-year-old saw me give her nineteen-year-old sister a hug at church one day, so later, she deliberately grazed me with her shoulder as she walked by. She didn't approach me directly and say, "Can I have a hug, too?" I was caught off guard by this, but I noticed an elderly woman watching, and I saw the look on her face when she saw it. And we just don't know what to make of it when things just happen to us, but if you understand the code and the fact that that was a mis-queue – it was an expression of a need, but it was delivered in a way that didn't risk being rejected – and you have to understand the code in order to get that.

So these kids learn that the only one they can trust is themselves. These kids – if you've been following what we've said about *attachment* – they're the ones that become the *avoidant* children – the ones that learn they're needs aren't going to be met. They learn, "I'm on my own and I have to take care of myself."

There are essentially four tools that this kind of kid uses. One is *power* – bullying, intimidation, threats – starts out with siblings and then moves into the school. *Control* – especially control of their environment, where you just keep quiet and don't say anything, because that brings trouble, or you make sure every i is dotted and every t crossed. I had a lady tell me once that, when their dad came home, they would listen, because they could tell, by how far his truck slid up the gravel driveway, how bad it was going to be when he got in the house. So all the homework was done, all the clothes were folded, all the baths were taken – tremendous pressure and huge anxiety – walking on egg shells – to try not to trip the trigger, so that the bomb wouldn't go off. Of course, he was always drunk. So it went off anyway. There was no way to win. There was a lady telling me, some time back, that her husband slept with his leg over her all night and disconnected the battery in her car every evening when she came home from work. That's control!

So power, control, and then the third thing is *manipulation* – of playing one parent against another, playing parents against teachers, playing older siblings against parents, knowing just what to say and when to say it in order to get what you need out of the situation. Power, control, manipulation.

The fourth thing is *charm*. I was talking to a lady recently, who told me that her husband used intimidation on her all their married life – was extremely self-centered, had to have everything his way. She said, "We've gone to counseling for years, but he hasn't met a

counselor yet that he hasn't been able to charm." So it always looks like she is the one in the wrong. That's called a *narcissist*.

I had to testify in a child custody case sometime back. The father was trying to get custody from the state and I was probably in favor of that, although it was certainly a toss-up, because he wasn't really a good father, but his attorney was trying to make it out like the reason he mistreated her was because she was uncontrollable. And she was trying to make the point that this child was very manipulative. I was up on the witness stand, so the judge asked me if I agreed with that. And I said, "Well, yes, I do, but you have to understand that no one has ever taken care of this girl in her entire life, so she does what she has to do to take care of herself. It's just that we don't like her doing it that way. That's all she ever had to count on – herself." And I knew that he knew that, but he just wanted me to say it, and also, to let the attorney know that he wasn't going to be fooled by her attempts to manipulate me. I like that judge. You hear all these horror stories about what the courts do to people, but my experience there was, that attorney wasn't able to fool anybody that was going to make any decisions in that case – very knowledgeable.

When this kind of child grows up, what's going to happen? Will it be easy for a child that's been on their own since day one to trust God? And what kind of parent will this child be? What kind of parent will *they* become? It really is no wonder that Jesus said, "When I return will I find faith on the earth?" All of this child neglect and abuse, and all of this dysfunctional family stuff, and divorce and blended families and all that, that's producing generations of children that don't trust anybody and will have a very hard time trusting God – will have a hard time having faith. It's also interesting that at the end time, Paul tells us, "People will be unmerciful, implacable, faithless, and haters of God." We know that faith of an infant – babies can't think about faith yet, because their brain isn't developed – if you don't understand day-before-yesterday, how can you understand faith, trust in God (somebody you can't see)? – very concrete at that age. So God builds the faith in the infant – the trust in parents – and then that gets transferred to God later, when we realize, "Oh, we have another Father" – *if* our father is trustworthy and our mother.

So what can we do about this in the children that we encounter – in our own children, if we have them? Can we even do anything? We like to think about this as a real disaster in society and something that can't be overcome. And yet, it could be, because any one adult can change any one child. One adult that knows what to do can change lots of kids, if we have the time to spend with them and if we know what to do. We're all changed by relationship. The insurance companies put short-term, cognitive, behavioral therapy – that's where we're getting kids to kind of do what we want them to do, even though they're not really being changed internally – just what we see on the outside – they're not bothering us anymore. That's what they focus on. But really, what causes a real deep-down change is relationships. One brain can change another. We've all had that experience. We've all been influenced by other people. We live differently because of our interactions with some folks. Others make us really angry. I mean, the look and shape of our brain is actually changed by our relationships with other people. So, if one person knows what to do, they can influence children or anybody in a positive direction.

So how do you do that? Well, we have to focus on the relationship. It's very important. We have to understand what they're communicating when we get the mis-queue – being grazed, or disrespected verbally or whatever. And then we have to learn how to meet that need directly, instead of responding negatively to the mis-queue. It's really important.

These children that get raised this way...they're really angry and they believe that they're bad, because they learned that from how they were brought up – that they weren't worth anything. And I know that a lot of Christians believe that we're all rotten to the core and we kind of agree with that, so we inadvertently fall into that with kids.

But I was thinking about a teenager I was working with sometime ago and she explained to me that she had a desire to tell people off when they bug her. She was an angry child. At one point she said, "You know, I'm not trying to bash what you do, but what if I took my business somewhere else?" So she saw our time together as me making money off of her, right? So I'm thinking, "What am I going to do with that?" Well, I went to baby in the crib. This is a communication, but it's not a direct communication. It's a mis-queue. And it's an attempt to use power and manipulation to scare me into thinking that she's going to leave. So what is the need? What do you think she really needs? What did she really want? What do you think? So what I said was, "You're wondering if I really care about you and if it's really true – that you can say whatever you want in here and I'm still going to be with you. So what you really want to know is if you can trust me. And, you know, I'm so glad that you had the *courage* to say that out loud, because that means you feel safe enough in here to ask that question. And, you know, you did it so respectfully. I've always known that you had a caring heart and that's one of the best things that you have going for yourself. I absolutely *love* that about you." See how you talk right to the true communication. You blow right by the mis-queue. You're not offended by it. You might be confused by it, but if you just go back to the baby in the crib, it becomes clear what needs to happen. It's easy.

Five ways to help one child: Okay? *Be curious*. Show an interest in their mis-queues and think about what they need. What's going on here?

Be open. Don't skirt the issue. Accept what they have to say, rather than dismissing them, and acknowledge it when you've misunderstood.

I heard a therapist tell this story once, about how she was talking to a six-year-old and he was explaining what it was like for him as a kid and how he was always neglected. He could even remember being left in a playpen all day long. And she said, "What was that like for you?" He said, "Well, I died." And she said, "So it felt to you like you died." And he got on his hind legs and walked right up into her face and said, "No, it didn't *feel* like I died. I died!" And she said, "Well, I'm so sorry I misunderstood what you meant. To you, you died." He said – now this is a really rude kid that had used the f-word on her and other things earlier – he said, "Thank you." She won, by the way, with even that incorrect reflection of what she heard, because it gave him the chance to express more succinctly and more profoundly *exactly* what he meant again and hear her acknowledge it.

Be in charge. That's the third thing. Be curious, be open, be in charge – if you're responsible for them. If you're not, then you need to require mutual respect. You have a need to have respect for them, but you need to communicate that they need to be respectful to you, too. But you have to know the difference between a mis-queue and a genuine disrespect. And then you have to talk to the need.

I had an interesting experience once here. I had a fourteen-year-old girl client, whose mother was late picking her up after her session, and I didn't have a client the next session. That happened fairly often, because sometimes the client that followed her would miss a lot. So she would sit on the table and play with her iPod quite a bit. And I would usually talk to her and she'd talk to me. Sometimes, she'd help me clean up. It was toward the end of the week and sometimes she'd vacuum for me while she was waiting. But I got the vacuum out this time. She hadn't been feeling well, so I thought, "Well..." So I got the vacuum out and I started vacuuming around. She got up and stepped on the cord of the vacuum, so that I couldn't vacuum and then would laugh. When that didn't get the response she was looking for – I was a little slow on the uptake – she walked over to my office and she went in and shut the door. Well, nobody goes in my office if I'm not there. So I left the vacuum running and I tiptoed over to the door, and when I opened the door, she was standing there, like this, with a pillow, and whacked me on the head with it. So what's the need? Attention. Right. She wanted attention. So I took the pillow away from her, grabbed her, and brought her over, and sat her down on the table, and sat down beside her, and put my arm around her, and said, "Is there something that you want to talk about?" She just laid her head over on my shoulder – didn't say anything. That's what she wanted. So it wasn't disrespect. It was a mis-queue. She didn't feel secure enough to say something polite to get my attention or to pull me in – because she doesn't really know to do that, because that's never been done to her.

Fourth thing: *be kind.* Understand their mis-queues are their way to communicate need. If they're used to being rude, then you model politeness back to them, while requesting politeness from them.

And the fifth thing is to *stay calm.* Stay regulated. Make sure that your emotional part of your brain and the thinking part of your brain are *both* still working – not just the reactive emotional part. Most of us are not used to dealing with that, so you have to keep your *whole* brain working when something like this happens to you, so that you can *think* about what's going on. When we don't know what to do, just go back to the baby in the crib. What's the communication?

I hope that helps a little bit in dealing with those children around you. You think, "Well, in the church, we don't have any kids like that." All of us are told not to offend the children – *all* of us. It wasn't just parents that Jesus said that to. And He said that because we can all make a difference, at the heart level, if we know what to do. And, if we do our part, when Christ returns, our children in our church will be in that group that God describes as called, chosen and faithful.