

Defending the Truth

Inspiring Our Youth

SPEAKERS Rev. Abel Pol | Sr Lucy Wagenaar | Br Craig vanderSchaaf

Well, good afternoon brothers. And sister? And a few sisters in the background that are sneaking in. Hopefully, everybody's very satisfied, not only with the good food, but also the good speeches. In Reverend Paul's speech, there was a quote. Most of us pursue change in our lives, a nicer version of what we already have. If you think about it, it's a powerful statement. What factors prevent the same pursuit of spiritual growth and change for us? And I'll ask you. Rev, if you don't mind to start off. I think the biggest one. The biggest one is that we don't prize. of being conformed to the image of Christ. I mean, if that's what you prize above everything else, then that's what you pursue. You pursue the things that you prize.

So I wonder sometimes how often, in our reformed circles, we actually have a heathen approach to faith. I mean, with a heathen, it's about control, right? You have your idol. And you keep the idol happy, you manipulate it in order to get the things that you want. And I wonder sometimes if we have a misplaced sense, maybe, that the covenant somehow works in that way as well. You know, there's a promise and obligation. I live up to my obligation. God has to keep his promise. To me. So I would think that that would be one factor that contributes towards that, that then you end up not really investing in the faith part because it's less about relationship and more about control, which is really a heathen way of thinking.

When I say that, I think this heathen way of thinking is in the background for all of us. As sinners, it is our default setting to move towards control and away from relationship when it comes to faith. And so the gospel is that God draws us in the opposite direction. Yeah, and I think just continuing on with that—Um— All of us. Have a degree of we feel comfortable where we're at. And I think we sometimes actually even feel comfortable in our sins. That we don't want to progress and we don't want to grow. And we don't want to mature, that's a lack of spiritual maturity. But we are actually content with the status quo and we're not actually pushing ourselves to where we should be going. Very good.

In the speech we also talked about the vulnerability aspect of being open. Um, how open? What we be with our older children. About sharing aspects of our own spiritual journey. Would this be helpful? or will it hinder our children? Yeah, it's a tricky one because it all depends what aspects of your spiritual journey you want to share. If it's the fact that in your early 20s you went church hopping to Riverview or Kingdom City— just to see what was out there— and you want to explain that to your eight-year-old, well, obviously that would be a bit damaging and they wouldn't understand what you were saying. So there's a time and a place, based on the child's maturity and what you're actually trying to get across to them.

And I feel too that it's about motive. What's my motive in sharing this with my child? Is it going to help them or is it going to hinder them? The other thing I was going to add to that as well is that It's important to speak freely, though, about the good things that happen in our life in regards to our faith and make it normal. Um, you have a minor car accident, you immediately are saying to your kids, isn't it amazing that God protected us? Or, you know, you find a little bilby on the side of the road, look how amazing that is. God made that animal. It sounds unnatural when you first do it if you're not used to talking that way, but the more that becomes a normal part of our daily language, the more our children will really understand our own spiritual journeys and growth too.

Yeah, I think that's well said, Lucy. The fact that sometimes the way that we talk spiritually doesn't come naturally. And I think we can just reflect on some of the conversations that we've all had. During the lunch and during the morning tea. A lot of our conversations are shaped around things and whether it be our work or something that we've done. I'm not saying they're not. Good things, but how much are we really shaping our conversation by what we believe in? Are

we? Are we convicted in our heart by what we believe? That we can actually be open to share this with others? And it starts as we We interact in our daily conversation with other men. That's how we want to be bringing our kids up.

We want to be bringing our kids up that we're wearing our heart on our sleeve. We really want to be sharing what's deep within inside of us. Kids need to see that the gospel applies to us as well. If it's only relevant to things that happened thousands of years ago. And we tell them it should be relevant to your life, but we're not showing what God has done in our life. Then what conclusion are they supposed to draw from that? So I think it is important to essentially talk about what the Lord taught you, not just mistakes, but also good things. I think that one's important that we reflect on the goodness of the Lord with our children. And we tend to maybe sometimes. Do less of that than pray about the bad things.

Can I share a quick story? My dad wasn't much of a talker when I was growing up as far as conversation went, but I always remember he told me once we were driving somewhere and I must say, to be in 13 or 14, and he asked me about smoking and what I thought. I didn't have very many thoughts. He said, 'Lucy, you know that I smoked from when I was 14 years old and I only quit when your older sister got asthma.' I said, 'Well,' and he said, 'The only thing that helped me stop was praying. My dad wasn't one to talk about his faith openly, so that comment has stuck with me. I can still see where we were driving in Albany at the time, and those sort of things make a huge impact on young people.

Very nice. In the speech, we talked about humility. And if you think back to the opening speech of the day, there was also mention of vulnerability. 'Empty hands, so to speak.' So how do men model this in practical ways? I think a very important one is how you pray. You will never lay your soul bare more than when you pray, and the sorts of things that you pray about. Um, it's in prayer that children I think would learn either to be hypocrites or to be open. So, prayer I think is a key component to that. You know, I think about what Malachi 4: 6 says, that when the Christ will come, he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the Father.

So that happens at the cross. Where you realize that you're both vulnerable in the same way. It's not a different vulnerability, it's just a a question of degree. And if we ignore that part, then the next half of the verse says, 'or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.' You know these words have weight. Yeah, I think it also comes back to the theme for uh for today that we are that we are men of courage and I just think especially of that word 'men.' We're in a room full of males, biologically, if we've got hair on our chest or we've got something that hangs between our legs, we identify as a male. Are we all men? And I think when we talk about being a man, we're talking about actions.

We're talking about walking in the spirit. We're talking about running the race or persevering. So I think all those action words really help identify who we are and that is the positive witness that we can be to our children. Yeah, I guess I just want to add a little mental health caveat here as well. Sometimes, or often, because we all know the rate of suicide amongst men. But when men start to be vulnerable and share things, it can feel like something's going to break open and a huge dam's going to burst. If that's the case for you, please do seek help. You're not abnormal. There's lots of people who feel the same way. And if that first help you get doesn't work, please keep on trying because people need you here and you're loved and cared for. And being vulnerable, what does it say about your security? Your identity? Sorry, I didn't quite catch. Being vulnerable, being able to share what's on your heart. Let's take a young person. Or to another man. What does it say about your identity?

That you are secure in the gospel.

Thank you. Craig, do you want to elaborate a little more? I think it shows, yeah, definitely that, but also that we're humble and that we're willing to learn. It was mentioned in one of the previous talks about the fact that as men we are prideful. Pride in the fact that we are strong and that we do have it all together. And I think when you break that down with some openness, it presents the real man and not that man that has a facade around him. Perhaps my thought was also the fact that if you have a saviour who knows all your sins. When you are sharing with somebody your security is in God. So vulnerability finds its power in Christ, so to speak. Shall we move along to the aspect of 'A

little bit of culture'. Our church community has a strong work ethic. Part of it seems to be our history. We take pride in being busy. And often we talk about being busy. And being successful in work and business seems to be a big deal. All too often our work becomes our identity. So what does this teach our children about us and our priorities and just your views on this?

Our identity ultimately has to be in Christ. Sorry. Our identity has to be in Christ. Christ took time to rest. He was probably the, if you think about it, he's the saver of the world. He's the busiest man who ever lived. I mean, even Elon Musk, nothing of what he does would come close to what Christ did, and yet Christ made a point out of resting. And having spiritual reflection with his disciples, who, in a sense, were his sons in the sort of spiritual sense of the word. Always keep on going. He made himself, he left margin to be able to work with the things that the father put in his place and I think for ourselves as well.

If you're working so hard, and I say this to myself regularly as well, if you're working so hard, they have no margin to stop what you're doing when a critical conversation comes up and you don't know when they're going to come. It could be at any point in time that a conversation comes up that this is important. If you have no margin in your life to have that conversation with your child or with your wife, then— something is wrong. And something will give. And if it's not your work, it will be your family. And maybe not right away, but it will eventually come out. In other ways. Yeah, I guess also to the point, though, of dads working hard, there's also, I guess, the aspect of the cost of living and a sense of worry amongst people just to meet the family's needs.

Our community, especially if you're from the free-form churches here, has grown tremendously, obviously, in the last 50 years. And the discrepancy between people who are financially very well off and those who aren't is there. And I guess maybe think about is my wealth, is that contributing to the worry of the people around me? And if I am worried about having the same things as perhaps my my mate does and I can't afford them, maybe I need to look at my own heart and where that lies. But I think it is worth acknowledging, from a woman's perspective too, that we often don't understand or get the burden that's on the husband's shoulders with bringing in the bread every week and what that looks like for them.

We all have the same amount of time, but how are we using the time that God has given us? Are we using it wisely? And just in reflection on some of the conversations with people today. That aspect of being busy with work. I'm so busy today. I've got so much on. I've got so much to do. Um, Ultimately, Brothers, men, you are the only ones that can do something about it. You are the only ones that can make it. A decision to change that. And also remembering that, if you're busy in that area, another area is suffering. And think about the commitments that you've made before God. To your wife, to your faith, and to your children is that work aspect that high, that them other commitments are suffering.

And that's a good point because they're not just commitments, they're vows that we made before God. And I don't think any of us made a vow about our work. Our work is a means in which we can fulfill those vows. So, yeah, nicely said. So just to add one little thing to that as well. So if we look at this— we are we are busy with certain things so that mean and we could we could use work as an example. Something is suffering. So what message is that sending to our children? There's a sports day for example that's on. Dad is too busy. He's going to go to work. Your young son or daughter is perceiving that as a My interests aren't really that important because his work is more important.

And I'm not saying we all need to drop everything and attend sports days and every conceivable outing for our children, but to have a balance and to see that our kids' interests and values are a higher priority in our decision-making. Very good. In your speech, Lucy, you mentioned that we all make mistakes with our children in our relationships. When we apologize to our children, what should we do and what should we avoid? Thank you. I guess it also depends what sort of character you are. If you know you lean far towards the pride end of the spectrum, you're going to need to be really humble and use all the words and no buts. But if you're on the other end of the spectrum and you tend to struggle with confidence, sometimes your apology can diminish the respect that your child has for you.

So it's really important to know where you're at, what you're thinking in regards to how you apologise and when. You got an example for us? So I guess, if I'm feeling like, you know, I've told my son off because he's smashed the bike up and I've yelled and screamed or whatever. If I'm really prideful, I'll be saying, 'I'm sorry, I shouldn't have healed, but, but, but, but with the bike.' But if I'm somebody who's really overly vulnerable or lower self-confidence, I might go the complete other way. I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have ever have done that. Your dad was so naughty. Dad was so wrong. Dad's going to buy you a new bike. So you go completely the other way. So I guess it's about being wise, balanced, and confident at the same time that God's got this.

You're not in complete control of what's going on. You're still modeling repentance in a sense to them. Right, so you have to be really specific. I've noticed with my own son, we pray together in the evenings on a fairly regular basis and I say to him you know when there's you don't just pray for forgiveness of sins in a general sense you have to be really specific about what specific sins those were but then we need to show that ourselves as well I think don't just say you know I was um I was grumpy with you but but give it a label I mean clarity, I think, is really, in any apologies, is the best thing that you can have. Yeah, I really like that aspect of being specific about the certain sins.

Struggles that we are overcome with and also the reliance on our savior that we, as parents, we, as dads, we get things wrong too—we need Jesus just as much as what our kids do, and our kids can really see that he's again that valued part in our life. Beautiful. There was a reference: Did you want to make another comment? No? There was a reference to praying with your children. Thank you for the segue. Um. Why is that actually important to do? Because of that same quote from Malachi 4: 6. When I pray with my son, I kneel. We kneel together and I would encourage you all to do the same thing. I've been to many old churches that are kneeling benches. And we don't kneel anymore when we pray.

And we should because when you kneel or even prostrate yourself sometimes completely. Down um, I think in in the Bible, uh, the body was used as an expression of humility in that sense. And when we do that with our children as well, when we kneel to pray together, it shows them that we are really on the same page. And so the prayer is not a time to be teaching. Or to be rebuking or to be admonishing or to do any of those things. But in our case, you know, we talk about what to pray about beforehand. Then he starts and I finish and we do it on our knees because that's where we belong and we're before God.

And when we look at what prayer is, prayer being the most important part of our thankfulness, and how are we mirroring this to our kids? Dependence on God as a loving father that God He's our Father that continues to walk alongside us and provide for us. Give us all that we need, that is relatable, that we're able to share and talk about any of our concerns with Him through prayer. Yeah, I really like how you've said that, Craig. I also think what's important too, part of what I try to do with young people is get them to, especially when they're dealing with poor men, mental health is to have God as a reflex by that I mean that when something goes wrong or they get a negative thought in their head the first thought is to go God help me with this and as adults we can help them with that if we just modeling prayer as a normal everyday thing not just the formal well thought out well-worded prayers but the simple god I really can't you don't think I'm bit here but I'm being serious God I really can't find my car keys can you help me kids are hearing you say that they're recognizing that that's how I can talk to God in my head and that's what we really need them to do the absolute dependence You mentioned apologizing in prayer or couldn't One of you touch on that. I think Prayer cannot be an opportunity for us to still criticize our children. That's really what I meant. Maybe others can elaborate on that more. I think it's been a topic of discussion earlier. But to really understand that it's you and your child before God.

I think we're entering into the realms of spiritual abuse, if I'm allowed to use the word abuse now, that we're not using that power, so to speak, that we have to talk down on our kids. Apologizing in prayer about being angry, but you're the one that made me angry in the first place, you know that we're using it in that in that positive but in that negative tone at the same time, it's very damaging and—and. Certainly against God's word. Thank you. In terms of emotional maturity that you spoke about, Lucy? What is the impact on children when they witness expressions of love between their parents? Be careful. Eww.

It depends on your age. Ours are at that age. But I think it's important that children see that their parents love each other. Um. If I may make a very small detour through a story, I don't know how old I was— I would have been maybe probably 10 or something like that. I think we were on furlough from Indonesia. Maybe it was even before then. But anyway, we were going to cross the border— from Canada to America— and if you've ever done that. You know that once you're in that lane, you're basically committed. You know, and so we're almost at the border, then, and my dad says to my mom, 'Where's the passports?' I thought you had them.

And she says, 'Well, you had them.' You know, they didn't really have an argument so much as just a fairly sort of an urgent discussion because it's like there's three cars to go. They're going to try to get into America without a passport. That's a lot of grief. So my mom burst into tears, and I remember. You know, we were devastated because we'd never actually seen them have— it wasn't a big argument, but we'd never seen that before. And the fact that I remember it now still, and I'm turning 43 in a couple of weeks, goes to show the impact that it had. But—what happened afterwards when the passports were found, of course, fortunately, before we crossed the border, it was a little stack in a drawer somewhere. My dad and mom made a point out of hugging each other in front of the kids and saying, 'See we still love each other so don't worry.'

Yeah, that's a good story. For many of us here, we think it's cringy when our parents show affection. There's an aspect of that, depending on what age you're at. But I think the opposite is true as well. When we see parents fighting and arguing, the tension that's between what message is that sending to our children? So I think we've got to be extra vigilant about what what we are displaying, and also building on that. What role model are we sending kids for their future, especially when it comes to finding a spouse? What are we saying about the way that we treat and respect our wife as as a woman? So there's all these aspects that we are creating them teachable opportunities in our in our own home that we actually are making the most of them.

Yeah, I would agree with that and also add, as well, that you're modelling healthy conflict resolution, you're showing how your repair ruptures, all those things that young people need to learn. All right, I want to pick up another thing from your speech, Lucy, parenting past the point. Sounds like an interesting concept, but what does it look like practically? And I'm not just asking you, but— If you want to start. Or depends on whether the gentleman has something. No? You want me to start? It's difficult because, like I said when I was speaking, it's not something that, it's not about pointing blame or saying that these things are really bad in my past and now I'm changing things for the future.

Um, but there is that sense of not thinking about the good old days, but every generation's got its struggle and we all need to think and reflect on how was I brought up? How did I react to that upbringing? Um, what sort of values do I want to bring into my family that I hope or I do have in the future? I think the gospel again is central here. If you think about what the second commandment says, right? That God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. But shows steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments, which means that.

If you feel like you can only parent in a way that duplicates what you're what your parents did, and if that was something negative, it doesn't have to be that way. There's always an off-ramp, so to speak, that the gospel teaches us to be self-reflective, to be self-analytical, to see ourselves in light of the gospel, to see our need for a savior, and that we do not need to repeat the mistakes that our parents made. If they made any, we do not need to parent to that point. And then, you know, if that was, let's say, if they had destructive patterns of communicating. Um, Every generation has an opportunity to come off of that off-ramp. We're not destined to repeat that over and over and over. And I think the gospel gives us real hope.

Because sometimes, you sort of do what you've been taught and you find out it's not working. And then the gospel says, 'Look.' Um, if we continue to turn to God in humility and faith, then we do not need to be destined to have that same sort of an ending. Yeah, well said. And I think to include that practical aspect, that using moments like this, whereas as brothers as men we can be together to to share and encourage, that we are actually all on that same journey together

and also to remember that when we parent, we parent for life. And there's different stages in the way that we bring our kids up. There's a certain physical busyness when they're busy, and as they grow up, the mental side of being busy with them but the journey continues even into to old age and and even including the grandparents among us here, your role as parenting and being grandparents is vital for the upcoming of the next generation.

Very good. Another aspect of your speech was being present, being there, getting into their space. This sounds great. What does it mean and how do we balance that with all our other commitments? Yeah, this is a big space, and I think it separates the men from the boys, doesn't it? To really be present, to really be engaged in your in your child's life what does that what does that look like and i think there's certain practical things that we can we can point to when it But. Just to be there, to be genuinely there for your kids in the day-to-day. We've covered a few practical things like being there for school excursions, but showing a genuine interest in their wellbeing. and that you're able to do that from day to day.

And I think that. The closer that we get to our kids, the more that we're actually able to build that relationship with them, that we're about to have them. we're able to have them conversations. that don't just stay on the surface. We're not just talking about football games with our kids. We're not just talking about going to the cricket, but that we can get down to them levels where we're talking about wholesome, upbuilding stuff through our conversations. Many men here have to have difficult conversations, challenging conversations with our kids. sometimes when it's confronting brokenness, but also teaching them the the realities of life. I think, for many of you here, had to do a talk on sexual education with your kids? Is it a biology lesson on reproduction or are we making it real?

Are we talking to our kids about what it means when a husband and a wife love each other? What does respect look like? What is consent? Uh, and unhealthy aspects of relationships as well as men is lust for all men. These are the real deep conversations that we should be having with our children. Uh, that will only become easier. I'm not saying they're going to be simple, but they will become easier when we have a grounded and open relationship with our children. Thank you. Lucy, before you speak, I'm going to get another question in, and I'll get you to speak first. Um. I am guilty of not always showing interest in my child. What they do or what they say. What practical ways can I reconnect meaningfully?

Again, I guess it depends on the age of your child. But it's just being interested in what they're doing. Absolutely, what Craig was saying about having the deeper conversations, that's our goal, to get to there. But you're going to have to start with the boring stuff. And that is on the floor, playing Lego. Again, asking your teenager about what they're doing. Send your teenager a text during the day. Mum said you got an exam today. I'm praying that it goes well. Just find little—it doesn't have to be huge, big, grand gestures. It's finding little things throughout the day that show you're thinking of them and you care about them. In that way, they feel seen, they feel secure, and they feel safe. Lego's not that bad. Thank you. Thank you.

I would say, whatever time you spend with your children, whether you've maybe done less of it in the past or not, let it leave space for conversations so that it's not just always doing exciting things with no room for deeper conversations. You know, like if you're, let's say, you own a boat and you're out at night. You know, you look up at the stars, that it becomes sort of a Psalm 8 kind of a moment and not just. Um, you know that you go all stars, you know it's night. Let's do some night fishing or that sort of thing, and have no space for those conversations. I would say: creating space and being aware, and also praying. For opportunities. And making time for those sorts of conversations is more important than, you know, however many trips to Bali you can do or that type of thing.

Wayne reminded me of a story that I'd shared with him earlier. And my eldest has given me permission to share this. But when she was in year eight or nine, I was worried because she was wasn't really saying much about what was going on in her head, like what she was thinking and feeling emotionally. But she really loved learning and she was especially interested in criminology, which I really am not, especially not the gory details. But I had to suck it up and we had many, many conversations about the current books that she was reading. Basically, I had to be interested so

she would talk and, slowly over time, she began to share deeper relational things with me. And now, as my husband will attest, she sits on our bed at 11 o'clock at night and she doesn't shut up.

So the recommendation is that you actually enter your child's world exactly where they're at and be self-sacrificing. Learn about what they love and what they think about. It's just a real mind-shifter, focused intentionality. Very good. As we come to an end. Before we leave today, what one thing would you want all men to consider? To take away with them so that they can make a difference in their lives, their children, close to them. Whether it's their own children, children of their friends, grandchildren. You can earn back money. You can never earn back time. Make your choice. Yeah, I think for me, I would encourage you as men to finish strong. It's not how we started, but it's how we finished. And if we model the greatest man.

That ever lived Jesus on the cross, his last words were: 'It is finished.' And it wasn't a falling over the finishing line. I've made it, but it was a and it is finished a victory of defeat. And I think we've got many different men here, many different backgrounds. Some things really resonate with others. For others, it'll bring up heartache and pain and broken relationships. But pressing forward, that we can finish strong. While we all have a pulse, God has a plan. I like that. I would like to say that I know the main thrust of my speech was that men need to be a compass for our young people, and I really do want that for them. personal level, and from a woman's perspective, you are so needed, you are loved and appreciated. I pray that, with God as your compass, you'll always know that and have the courage to shine His light for those around you.

Thank you very much.