Bob: Terence Chatmon was doing research into his family tree when he found the Bible that had belonged to his great, great, great grandmother. As he looked through the Bible, he began to realize there was a turning point in the Chatmon family tree that had taken place during her lifetime.

Terence: What we saw was a very significant shift in our family when my great, great grandfather came to Christ. The men in the generation before him had not had a personal relationship with Christ, from her perspective. The reason we knew that is that in her Bible were the names of the men she was praying for and the recording of testimonials that she had written down. But when my great, great grandfather came to the Lord, we saw a significant shift in our family, spiritually.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Tuesday, June 6th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. When a life is changed and a parent becomes more purposeful and intentional about the spiritual development of his children, there can be a significant impact that lasts for generations. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. You didn’t start off parenting with a business plan for how you were going to raise your kids; did you?

Dennis: Oh, are you kidding?! When Ashley was born—I remember this in the hospital—first of all, I was glad I didn’t pass out. [Laughter] I just wasn’t prepared for it—I’m sorry.

Bob: I’m glad you remember everything in the hospital.

Dennis: All the birthing classes we went to—I just wasn’t quite ready for the miracle of it all; but when they pulled that little girl out, I remember thinking: “Are there any instructions on her tummy?”—[Laughter]

Bob: —“something!” [Laughter]

Dennis: —“on her back? How do you do this thing called being a parent?” because, all of a sudden, you move from being a husband and a wife to a dad and a mom, who are supposed to have a mission.
Bob: You are now responsible for—not just the physical wellbeing of a child /an actual human being whose life you must protect and preserve—but you’re responsible for the soul of that child as well.

Dennis: You are—and the spiritual development of that soul.

We’ve got somebody here, with us in the studio—not just somebody. It’s Terence Chatmon joining us again. Welcome back, Terence.

Terence: It’s good to be back.

Dennis: Terence is the CEO of Fellowship of Companies for Christ International. It’s a network of executive leaders who band together to use their influence and position to honor Christ, as executives. He is the father of three children / the husband of one wife, whose name is Wanda, for 34 years. He’s written a book called Do You Children Believe? I’m going to begin right there—today, do they believe?

Terence: You know, by the grace of God, they do—despite us, I always say. What we pointed them to—was the cross—to really what He’s done versus what we do. I wanted them to understand completely what He’s done. See, I grew up really under what I call performance theology. I grew up in a place that I was going to hell every weekend—it was just a matter for what. I was trying to earn that favor. I knew who the Lord was / I knew who Christ was, as a Redeemer; but I was trying to earn that favor. It was a religion, if you will, of works. I realized it’s not about religion; it’s about relationship. I wanted them to understand and have a deep relationship and understand that Christ is the only sufficiency in this world and after.

So, they do, by the grace of God. They understand that they have a sinful nature in there that needed to be watered and all types of stuff. It was like Peter saying—you know?—“Just wash me all over,” at this point; but I wanted them to clearly understand what He has done on that cross. The idea is that they would fall madly in love with what He’s done, and His life, and the life—that He came from the heavenlies—that He didn’t have to come and pay the ultimate penalty. You know, He died—and we all know the story—He rose; but He is also interceding on our behalf right now. Praise the Lord for that!

I give Him all praise, honor, and glory. He uses us, and He works in us and through us for this purpose, as parents; and we have a great responsibility, but it’s also a great privilege and honor.

Bob: Was there ever a season, as there has been with some of our kids, where they weren’t sure that the straight and narrow was the path they wanted to walk on?
Terence: Oh, my son tells a wonderful story in the book. In fact, his endorsement—I made sure, out of all the folks we could get to endorse this book, I wanted my kids and my wife—by the way, that one wife, too, for 34 years—I wanted them to tell their story, not my story, and how this has impacted their life.

He talks about a time of doubting this whole process—doubting his faith / doubting this whole planning process, what we were going through—but the good news is that, even today, after all the kids are out of the house, and they have their own families and so forth, we still do family devotion time every other week from 8 to 9—five cell phones going on a conference call. My job is to lay out the year. Now, I get a chance to watch them teach and demonstrate what we had talked about, you know, some 10/15 years now. We’re still doing it—we’ve made a commitment / a covenant, if you will, to continue this process for the rest of our lives.

You guys, the idea is not about this generation for me. They were—I wanted them to know they were the sixth generation, in the Chatmon family, to carry this cross. Our lives and our family were dramatically changed as a result of the Lord coming into it. I wanted them to understand that their responsibility goes to the grandchild, to their children, and their children, and so forth. We should seek generational impact.

Dennis: That relay race of six generations—the baton was almost dropped by you.

Terence: Absolutely!

Dennis: Your wife had to pick up a spiritual 2 x 4 and whack you between the eyes some 15 years into your marriage and say, “Terence, wake up!”

Terence: So, you had to remind me of that, Dennis.

Dennis: Well, you write about it—it’s where it all started. Now, I’ve got a feeling we probably have some listeners here who are either that man or that woman; and they are not doing their assignment. They are not taking this, wholeheartedly, as an assignment from God to raise their children in the ways of God, and the spiritual growth of their kids, and make a handoff in a way so that their kids can honor God in their generation.

Bob: Well, first of all, how would they know if they are that man or not? If somebody is trying to do a self-analysis, as a parent, and they say: “Okay; here’s what we’re doing. We’re taking our kids to Sunday school. We’ve got them in the Christian school. We buy VeggieTales videos for them.” So, they’re going: “Am I doing what I need to be doing? How can I tell whether I am being the intentional, purposeful parent or whether I’m just kind of keeping this in my environment?”

Dennis: I wouldn’t be so simplistic to say, “This is the total answer,” but I’d like to make a pass at it. Deuteronomy 6 talks about waking up in the morning, with a hundred pound sack of flour on your back, that’s a burden—and it’s the burden of passing on the truth
about God and your experience of God to your children on a day-in and day-out basis. If you’re not feeling that burden—as you arise in the morning, as you go throughout the day, as you go to bed in the evening—then, I think, Bob, it might be time to pull back and do a little spiritual wheel-alignment of your own life: “Are you about the King’s duties today and what you’re doing? Are you fulfilling what He commanded you to do?”

How would you answer the question, Terence?

Terence: Well, you know, I had to look at my core values: “What were the non-negotiables in my life?” He gives us three disciplines—very sure / maybe more: “Are you in God’s Word? Are they in God’s Word?”—number one. Secondly, prayer life: “What does that look like in your life? What does it look like in your children’s lives?” Then, thirdly, worshipping—today’s worship—you’re separating the kids / you’re in multiple places. Then, you go out to IHOP®, or wherever you go; and the next thing you know—you never even talk about the sermon and never talk about the truth that’s been shared. Less than ten percent of Christians are talking about what they shared on Sunday and what they’re talking about during the week.

If we’re really going to look at prioritizing our time—I call them non-negotiables: “What are the non-negotiables in your life that need to be looked at, and examined, and prioritized on your weekly schedule and your daily schedule? How are you doing in those areas?” But I want to make sure we don’t take a set of handcuffs off and put another set of handcuffs on—this is not a works-theology. This is a theology that is birthed in joy and great love and compassion for the Father. You know, the day that my kids enjoy reading God’s Word, praying together, worshipping together—in our case, doing devotional time together—it’s a sweet time, and a sweet aroma around our house.

Bob: You started off on your plan to try to realign things, spiritually, in your family. You started off saying, “We’re going to, once a month, get together and have this kind of family devotion time.” Your kids rebelled against that; didn’t they?

Terence: Yes; by—here I am, the spiritual leader / I’ve got all this great wisdom. I’m going to them; and I say: “Yes; I’m travelling about 80 percent around the world. So, I’ve got a great idea. Why don’t we meet once a month and tackle this?” They looked at me: “Once a month, Dad! Can you imagine talking to mom once a month and having a great relationship with her?”—an ouch moment; right? So, I got it.

They said, “Well, what about—we’ve got to get together at least daily, obviously; but what about once a week in a formal way?” So, I’m going, “Once a month.” They’re going, “Once a week.” That tells you the spiritual level that I was on, but we ended up doing every other week together—I felt that was a commitment I could make.

Bob: And they loved this time getting together as a family?
Terence: Oh, they loved getting together. We were punctual and had a great time. We made it fun.

Bob: Now, I’ve got to know what you did, because my kids didn’t always cherish our getting together for a little spiritual alignment at our house; you know?

Dennis: Bob, I can’t imagine that!

Bob: When I said, “Let’s get together, and we’ll have some—

Dennis: You’re such a fun daddy.

Bob: —“family devotions,” they weren’t always like: “Oh, yes! Let me turn off the computer / the TV. I’ve been waiting for family devotions all week!” How’d you pull this off?

Terence: We made it a lot of fun, Bob. We made a lot of competitive things, and we had games and fun stuff around the house. I think about that first putt-putt game—by the way, I did keep the score card because I was victorious in that process—but I digress. It was a fun time, and we just did fun things; right? We talked about Jesus, whether we were going bowling, or whether we were going to a baseball game, or whether we were sitting around the table and just sharing life.

The one thing I found interesting to them—and probably most people—is I asked them questions and talked and designed my devotions around their life: “Talk to me about your life in high school,” or “…your life in elementary school. Tell me what happened today in your life.” So, basically, I engaged them by encouraging them to talk about their life and their life experiences. Then, I tried to tie back into that.

Dennis: And you just kept doing that—

Terence: Just kept doing it.

Dennis: —week, after week, after week or every other week. There was a time when your son was in college, years later, when you knew that it had clicked. There was a phone call he made back to the family to tie back in. Tell them about how he wanted to tie back into the—

Terence: Oh, I tell you—this was one we’d been praying for, thinking: “Is he hearing anything that I’m saying? Maybe, he’s not hearing anything I’m saying.” And so, he’s at university; and he’s producing—he’s a music producer at Belmont University—big music business school.

Bob: Yes.
**Terence:** So, he’s producing a major event there. I mean, this is a big deal. He stops the production at 9 o’clock and says, “I need to step away for an hour.”

**Dennis:** Talking about the whole cast—

**Terence:** The whole cast.

**Dennis:** —and the crew.

**Terence:** This is time and money; okay?

**Dennis:** Right.

**Terence:** And he gets on—he says: “I need to step off. I have some time to spend with my family.” So, he stepped—he didn’t even really tell them exactly what he was doing—he stepped off for an hour, went through our family devotional time that we had designed; then, he came back in. They said, “Where have you been?” He said: “Guys, every other week, I’m committed to take time with my family and walk through a devotion. We’ve committed to this for the rest of our lives. That’s just what I completed—was that time with the Lord of my family.” They were just absolutely floored about that and said, “Tell me more.”

You know, our kids—they do have a passion for this. We can’t water down this gospel—we have to go straight it / we have to approach life with the truth. In this case, I realized, “My son got it!”

**Bob:** So, this every other week devotion—when he went to college, he was still on the hook for it?

**Terence:** Oh, not only when he went to college—we still do it today.

**Bob:** He got married—he’s still on the hook?

**Terence:** Still went through it. He’s going through it until I can’t see anymore—[Laughter]—and walk anymore.

**Bob:** So, you’ve got your kids—and I presume, maybe, their spouses are joining them now?

**Terence:** You know, here is the beauty of it. We get a chance to know—not only just to meet—but to know our kids’ spouses. In fact, the way we’ve designed it is that before they actually marry—now, it’s not legalistic / I mean, they don’t have to do this, obviously—although we might disown them; who knows? [Laughter] But the way we designed it is that the kids—if they have a significant other—they would get on the phone call every other week when they are really serious about this.
You know, I got a chance to really get to know my daughter-in-law. In fact, I believe she came to Christ in a deep way as a result of those phone calls. She thought she knew a little bit, but we—it’s like Hebrews 6:1 says: “Hey, let’s get off the milk”; right? “Let’s go to this meat. Let’s go to this deep understanding of God’s Word.” I believe she came to a deeper relationship with the Lord as a result of our phone calls.

Then, my sons-in-law—I got a chance to get to know both of them. It was a rich moment. I didn’t just know them in name and so forth. I had a personal relationship with them as a result of these devotional times.

**Bob:** Now, there might be some listening, who think: “This sounds a little controlling to me. I mean, you should have released these kids. The fact that you’re still having devotions with your kids after they’re married just feels like you’re kind of reaching in and trying to direct their lives when they should be more on their own.”

**Terence:** You know what’s interesting? They’re the ones that came up with this covenant—not me!

**Dennis:** That’s cool.

**Terence:** That’s kind of cool; right? Can you imagine your kids dragging you to church every day?—that’s a win. But no; they actually—during that time in Lake Lanier, we actually came up with about six or seven things in our covenantal agreement that we would adhere to for the rest of our lives. It’s not—they can walk away any year. They can sign up for a year, and they can walk away after a year. Each year, I keep trying to kick them out; but they keep coming back! I can’t get rid of them—so it’s a good thing.

**Dennis:** Okay; I know there has got to be a listener, right now, who is as curious as I am: “What did you cover last week? What was the lesson, and how did you do it?”

**Terence:** Well, we’re going through the New Testament this year. My job is to lay out the year. We’re always going to be in God’s Word, prayer, and some form of worship together every year. This year, we’re going through the New Testament again. So, we’re now going through that process. The beauty is—they can also teach. My job is to assign who is going to be the teaching leader, so to speak, for the week. And then, whoever the spouse of the teaching leader—they pray for the group. Then, whoever taught—they end the session in prayer.

This past week, we’re going through the New Testament. We’re in the book of John now, and we’re starting to go through that. We have a daily Bible—a chronological daily Bible—that we go through. It tells you how many days and what to read each day and so forth. Then, we get on the phone, talk about: “What have you read? What have you learned? What truths have been shared? How do you apply this to your life? What
challenges do you have in life, and what are you looking at?” I tell you—it’s a rich moment.

**Dennis:** Terence, as you were talking, I couldn’t help but think how you’re mirroring what Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica. Paul said to them—he said, “For you know how like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” What Paul is saying here: “I’m assuming that the daddies are doing their duty—that they are encouraging, imploring, exhorting, and cheering on their kids as they make right choices.”

And I think sometimes, Bob, as our kids grow up and become adults, we can underestimate the importance of just a good word from Mom / just a good word from Dad—just to wrap your arms around a child over the phone or, maybe, it’s a Skype call—but to cheer them on as they do life, because they’ve got a lot of challenges today in this generation.

**Bob:** You mention, Terence, that there was an aunt in your family who played a significant role, spiritually, in your own development; right?

**Terence:** One section in our plan is genealogy. I never realized how powerful this section would be. In fact, I questioned it when I first put it in the planning process; because we know it’s a personal relationship with the Lord—it’s not generational—but I did want to understand our spiritual walk from a legacy and heritage standpoint. So, I went to her. She is the keeper of genealogy in the family. I thought she just had a few documents—she had *binders* of documents.

**Dennis:** She’s the family historian.

**Terence:** She’s the family historian. She went back and shared with me documents back from 1824 about the spiritual legacy of our family.

**Dennis:** Wow!

**Terence:** As I read that, I looked at the history of these men—the women had a personal relationship with Christ but not the men—but when my great, great grandfather
came to the Lord, we saw a significant shift in our family, spiritually. You know, so many things—we probably don’t have time to talk about today—but boy, I realized that: “Wow! What a rich legacy here.” I challenged the children that they were the sixth generation: “Don’t drop the baton.”

I also, certainly, don’t want to give the impression that we are this spiritually-amazing family and doing all these amazing things. In fact, man, I fall short daily; but I believe that’s why He gives us this idea of repentance at the cross daily. I’m teaching our kids what repentance is and how to go to Him on a daily basis. It’s not the decision that you’re making, necessarily; it’s where you are, when you’re making that decision—make it on the altar—take it to Him—He will lead, guide, and direct your path.

**Dennis:** I think we’ve given our listeners plenty to chew on today. I’d like to challenge you to get Terence’s book, *Do Your Children Believe?*; because, in the back of it, there is a little project back here called a “Generational Spiritual Development Plan” that, frankly, Terence, I think my be worth the price of the book. It’s pretty simple—but you just outline how a couple / a mom and a dad—maybe, a single parent—needs to sit down and evaluate what their vision is for their family, their mission, their values. When I say, “values,” I’m talking about core values. Barbara and I did this as well. I would have to—I hate to use the word in defining it—but it was invaluable for Barbara and me to hammer out what our core beliefs were / our core values—then, try to back it up by being intentional about teaching them.

All of us need help and encouragement going through life. I feel like you’ve done this in your book, Terence. I’m grateful to God for you, for the model your family is, and I pray that your legacy does continue on for six more generations beyond the six that were handed to you.

**Terence:** Well, thank you, Dennis.

Just very quickly—you know, we just talked this last week. The number-one issue, when we teach this, is core value section. A man stood up—he says: “Terence, I realized I have values, but they are all secular in nature. My guiding principles are not really reflecting who I say I am.” So, we started there before vision.

I just want to challenge and encourage everyone that the idea is: “I don’t want to see another generation go by who has, at least, not heard the name, Christ Jesus.” For me, it’s that Judges 2:10 moment—that just one generation after Joshua died, an entire nation fell away from what they had been taught. Are we at that Judges 2:10 moment?

**Dennis:** Yes; it says, “They did not know God or practice His commandments.” You look at our nation today—this is why this broadcast is so important for our country—but also, most importantly, for the listeners—to just encourage you to keep on keeping on and do your duty for the glory of God.
Bob: There is that theme verse in the book of Judges, where it says, “There was no king in the land, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.” And you look at our culture today and say, “That’s the value system.” We’re trying to create a culture where everybody does what seems right in their own eyes, and that is a path to destruction. That’s not going to lead you toward godliness / it’s not going to lead you toward life or light—it’s going to lead you toward destruction.

I would echo what you said, Dennis: “We are very grateful for the listeners, who are not just listeners, but an active part of this ministry.” As you support the work of FamilyLife, you are making it possible for all that we’re doing to reach more people. That’s our goal—we want to see every home become a godly home. The thing that limits us most is just having the resources available to expand this ministry in more directions.

So, “Thank you,” to those of you who are regular Legacy Partners, supporting this ministry. And if you’ve never donated to support FamilyLife Today, let me encourage you to make a donation today. It’s easy to do. You can go online at FamilyLifeToday.com; or call 1-800-FL-TODAY to donate; or you can mail a donation to us at FamilyLife Today at PO Box 7111, Little Rock, AR; and our zip code is 72223.

Let me also encourage you to get a copy of Terence Chatmon’s new book, which is called Do Your Children Believe?: Becoming Intentional About Your Family’s Faith and Spiritual Legacy. We’ve got copies available in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. You can order from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or call to order at 1-800-358-6329—that’s 1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

Now, tomorrow, we’re going to introduce you to a very interesting guy. He’s a world champion bass fisherman. If you’re into that kind of thing, you probably know the name Hank Parker. If you’re not into fishing, you still want to be here tomorrow; because Hank’s story is amazing. You’ll meet him tomorrow. Hope you can be here for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas.
Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.