

“Fathers: The Spiritual Leader of the Family” (Deuteronomy 6:1–9)(5.22.22)

Deuteronomy 6:1–9 (NIV84) *Love the Lord Your God*

6 These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess,² so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.³ Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you.

⁴Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.
⁵Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **"Fathers: The Spiritual Leader of the Family"**

INTRODUCTION:

I failed my sons. I failed to do what is commanded in this scripture. I believed in the ethics and morality of Christianity, but did not have a relationship with Christ. Periodically, I would practice the Christian faith, but fell far short of "Loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

Instead, I conceded my God-given responsibility to my wife Carol. I supported her in raising our two boys in the faith. She took them to church and Sunday School and I always sided with her when they resisted. Sometimes I would go with them too for a season. But what happens when our actions don't follow our words? What happens when we are inconsistent with our children? Most often the children will follow our actions instead of our directions. And, that is what happened for us.

As we launched the boys into adulthood, they fell somewhere between their father and mother. They would have described themselves as Christians, but

they were not whole-hearted. They did not have a relationship with the Lord Jesus. Like so many, they might have confessed with their mouths that Jesus was Savior, but they did not confess Jesus as Lord: recognizing His power, authority, and majesty as God.

Praise be to God that today I tell you they "Love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength." Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, His love endures forever. God Almighty intervened in my son's lives.

My older son married a woman who was not a Christian and who had a different set of values. While they had some happy times, there was a lot of conflict. Their relationship was tumultuous and ended in a heart-breaking divorce. Through the pain and tears, he started asking himself and God serious questions. He was nurtured in this process by a program called Divorce Care at his church. As he became diligent in his study of scripture and responded to the prodding of the Holy Spirit, he came to a full-fledged faith in the Lord Jesus.

My younger son suffered a life-threatening brain bleed at the age of 19. Looking back, we can see God's hand on our son's circumstances that allowed him to survive. As he navigated through therapies to regain and retrain brain functions, he

was being mentored by the pastor from my wife's church. While he permanently lost some capabilities, he gained a saving faith in God.

So today, I call on young fathers to NOT be like me. From the very beginning, train up your child in the way they should go. I am proud of both of my sons, as they are the father that I should have been. Praise the Lord.

BODY:

In the English Standard Version of the Bible it gives this introduction to "Deuteronomy, which means "second law." It is a retelling by Moses of the teachings and events of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. It includes an extended review of the Ten Commandments (4:44–5:33) and Moses' farewell address to a new generation of Israelites as they stand ready to take possession of the Promised Land. Moses reminds them of God's faithfulness and love, but also of God's wrath on the previous generation of Israelites because of their rebellion. Repeatedly he charges Israel to keep the Law. Deuteronomy is a solemn call to love and obey the one true God. There are blessings for faithfulness and curses for unfaithfulness."

Within the context of how to be who God has called them to be as a nation and as a people, Moses declares the centrality of the family. J.C.

Maxwell wrote, "Home is where life makes up its mind." Socrates asked, "Fellow citizens, why do you turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth and take so little care of your children to whom one day you must relinquish it all?"

Why do I say that the father is the spiritual head of the household? First, let me acknowledge that our modern mentality resists the scriptural guidelines. It seems old-fashioned at best and many would call it misogynist. Nevertheless, I trust that it is truth that transcends any man-made truth of modernity.

First, Moses is speaking a Jewish audience. It is a patriarchal society. There was no doubt in their mind that the husband was the head of the family. When I looked up fatherhood and family structure in the *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present*, it stated twice that the father's authority over the child was almost supreme. And, it gave the example of Abraham's readiness to sacrifice Isaac.

Second, I am going to give you the Apostle Paul's guidance. We don't have time to unpack it now, but I would be glad to conduct a Bible Study where we could wrestle through it. Let me warn you to

hear it all. For instance, you might hear the first few statements and shut out the critical context within which they are to be upheld. Paul says in Ephesians 5:22–33 (NIV84)

²² Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—³⁰ for we are members of his body.³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Here is one more argument to support the father as the spiritual head of the family. In verse 2, our NIV says Moses commands his hearers and their children and their children to obey and fear the LORD their God. Other translations say son and your son's son; or your son and your grandson. That means these commands are to be passed down from father to son in each generation.

Notice that Moses says that fear of the Lord is a good thing. In being obedient they learn to fear God. Then three verses later we are given the greatest commandment about loving the LORD our God totally. That is a little mystifying at first. J.C. Maxwell explains it fairly well:

"Fear the Lord" is mentioned in verses 2, 13, and 24; and *"love the Lord,"* the greatest of all commandments, is mentioned in verse 5. Though they at first seem contradictory, these two emotions are closely related. Fear must stem from respect and reverence for the Creator God; it must produce within us total awe of His sovereign lordship. It requires the knowledge that God first loved us and has our interests at heart. God has a right to command our love, and He does. Unfortunately, that is not always enough. Fear that arises from a sense of awe can be the motivation for love. The keeping of His commandments is a

tangible expression of our obedience to God through fear and love.”

Let me give you a simple illustration. Recently, I watched part of a class on pickleball for newer players. The instructor had constructed a ribbon running parallel to the net leaving about a two-foot space between them. The drill was for the players to hit the ball back and forth between the two boundaries. Why? Well, it is obvious that you must hit the ball over the net. But in pickleball, if you hit the ball even a little bit high near your opponent, you are setting them up to smash the ball back at you – making it unreturnable and ending the point.

So the instructor was giving them guidance for their own good. They were free to hit the ball over the pink ribbon every time if they wanted. Then when they went out into the real world of pickleball they would suffer the consequences. Not only would they lose the games, they might find themselves tattooed with little circles from the little round holes on the pickleball, as their opponents repeatedly smashed the ball towards them.

By being careful to obey all God’s decrees and commands, the people of Israel would be blessed. They would develop this healthy fear. In verse two it also says they would ENJOY long life. Did you

catch that? Not only long life, but a life with joy. In verse three Moses says obedience is necessary so that things will go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey. Not only will your families grow, they will prosper. The Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you.

I am no prosperity gospel preacher, but Moses states that plain as day. Have you ever considered this kind of reasoning about God's commandments, laws, and decrees? Jesus himself says that if we love him we will obey His commands.

Let us turn to Psalm 119 on page ???. We are not going to read it right now; I just want you to see how long this psalm is because it is all about exalting God's commands. You can read it for homework.

We must partner with God in parenting our children. We must set boundaries for our children the way Father God has set boundaries for us. The purpose is to bless the children. The purpose is for them to understand they are loved by their parents and by their God. Hence, healthy boundaries lead to a healthy fear and respect for authority. Obedience to God's commands, decrees, and law, will keep us out of many trials and tribulations. But additionally, the trust in our families and our

heavenly Father that grows out of obedience to His will, equips us to navigate the storms of life.

Verse four is a statement of fact. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. It is central to Jewish and Christian faith. It differentiated the Jews from nearly the whole pagan human race. The Chosen People had one God – Yahweh – The I AM.

A few minutes ago, we recited the Nicene Creed. It starts: "We believe in one God." Yes, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three in one. In the section about Jesus, we recited "true God from true God, begotten not made, of ONE BEING with the Father." In the portion on the Holy Spirit, we recited "who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified." FACT – there IS God and only ONE GOD.

I have already mentioned the greatest commandment, in one way or another, several times. It is not called the greatest commandment here in Deuteronomy chapter six, so where do I get that idea? Mark 12:28–34 (NIV84)

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

This account is repeated in Matthew and Luke. In Luke, it serves as an introduction to the story of the Good Samaritan. Notice the addition of the word mind by Jesus. He might have found this necessary because of the huge influence of the Greek culture, which highly valued intellect. Jesus is making sure there are no loopholes. We MUST love God totally, with our whole being. There is to be no part of our person or our life partitioned from God’s sovereignty.

Moses states that the Lord’s commandments are to be upon our hearts. This is echoed in Jeremiah 31:33 (NIV84)

³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

There is a similar passage in Ezekiel 36:26-28 and which is quoted in the New Testament Hebrews 10:16.

Having the Lord's law on our heart ensures they are near and dear for us. It implies an affection. The LORD is active in this process. How so? We must expose ourselves to the Holy Scriptures. That means reading and hearing them. When we do that, it resonates with God the Holy Spirit directing us. A connection is made and we begin to appreciate the blessing of God's truth in our lives.

Of course, it is easier to see how this relates to our minds. Romans 12:1-2 (NIV84) *Living Sacrifices*

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.² **Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The Holy Spirit is active in this process. Being a Christian requires using our minds. We must understand that our mind is a battlefield where the Devil and the world fight against the truth of God. We must begin sharing with our children as early as possible the story, and stories of God.

When I first read "Impress them on your children," I thought about the process of ironing clothes. It takes some pressure, but it also takes some finesse. Otherwise, you iron wrinkles into the shirt or dress and create a mess. Instead of impress, other translations say to teach the children diligently.

Let me caution you. Do NOT make it a chore for you and them. There was a day, when if the child misbehaved, the punishment would be to read a portion of the Bible or write it out. I do not think this will create an affection for God's word. Look for teachable moments, opportunities, and capitalize on them. Talking about the Lord Jesus and the Bible should become a fairly normal thing in your home.

You can be creative. And today, we are blessed with access to so many creative tools. Again, you can use RightNow Media. They have a large Kid's Library of videos. You can do crafts and activities related to the Bible. Certainly, get a children's Bible and storybook. Ask other parents. Ask our Family Ministry Leader, Samantha.

Moses goes on to explain that talking about God and His decrees should be part of everyday living. When you are sitting comfortably at home; when you are out and about doing your normal daily

routine, the things of God will be a normal topic of conversation. End your day, when you lie down, with prayers and thanksgiving. Begin your day, when you get up, with scripture reading and prayer.

The Jews took Moses very literally and tied boxes that contained God's word on their arms and on their forehead. A fuller understanding of this would indicate that tying them to your hands would encompass all of your activities of the day – all your work, your play, your normal routine. Tying them to your forehead would mean that wherever you look and wherever you turn, the truth of God will guide you.

While at first glance, this seems overwhelming, think about it a different way. Find comfort in a God that loves you and cares about you so much that He wants to be involved in all the details of your life. And if you are cognizant of God being active in your life, this should give you comfort and confidence.

The command to "Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" can certainly be taken literally. We need visual reminders, especially when we are exposed to so much ungodly stimulus in our day. Look around your homes; could anyone guess who you worship? For

quite some time, I put a sign on my front lawn: Jeremiah 24:15 But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." While these things can serve as public testimony, they are also are a reminder and reinforcement of our own faith.

CONCLUSION:

For too long, there was the false assumption that being a father comes naturally, that somehow we just innately know how to be good fathers. Ideally, our fathers would teach and model godly fatherhood for us. Most often, that simply is not the case.

Each father would benefit from having another Christian man as a mentor. Fathers can help each other, sharing their experiences, challenges, and victories. This whole sermon series will be available on our website in video and textual form. If you use the RightNow Media App, you will see that there is a Fatherhood Channel on the Emmaus Church feed. If you find another video on RightNow Media that you think would benefit other fathers, you can email a link to them; or you can let me know and I will add it to the Fatherhood channel.

Another option is to send me your questions. You can do that via email, text, or FB messenger. We have four more weeks in this series. There is much more to cover. Your questions could shape the

sermons in these next few weeks. Do not be bashful. Do not hesitate.

How is it possible for a father to do ALL that is required of us? We will stumble. We will make mistakes. But, praise God for His love and mercy and the equipping by God the Holy Spirit.

With Paul, I pray for you, Hebrews 13:20–21 (NIV84)

²⁰ May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,
²¹ **equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him,** through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Fathers, you too should pray to your heavenly Father.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.