

The Equipping of Disciple-Making Families (Deuteronomy 6:1-9)

Moses spells out how the Israelites could be successful as they enter into the Promised Land. They are to love God completely, which would motivate them to obey God's commands and to fear God. To be successful in the long run, they must teach their future generations to do likewise.

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Introduction

Our present preaching series is "Building the Vision, Leaving a Legacy." We want a vision that makes a lasting impact into the next generation. We have talked about who we are: We are an urban Chinese-heritage church in central Houston that reaches all those in our lives, Chinese or otherwise. In the next four weeks, we will look at how to reach our community. What will we be doing to be successful in propagating the gospel? There are three areas that we will focus on, namely, equipping, sending, and planting. Today, I will be talking about equipping: namely, equipping disciple-making families.

As we come to the end of the baseball season, the playoffs are around the corner. Our home team, Houston Astros, is leading the American League conference. For many years, Ellie was not much of a sports fan. However, she knew that I love sports. As a result, she decided to learn baseball. I explained the basics of hitting and pitching as well as key elements for success. One of the keys is consistent pitching with the starting pitchers as well as the relief pitchers. This year, the Astros have one of the best pitching teams in all of baseball. As a result, we are one of the best teams in baseball.

Our text this morning is from Deuteronomy 6. Moses spells out how they are going to be successful as they enter the Promised Land. Before we jump into our passage this morning, I want to give you some context. In Exodus, the Hebrew people grew in great number and God blessed them abundantly. Pharaoh felt threatened by them and made them slaves. Because of their call for help, God sent Moses to deliver them out of Egypt and to bring them to the Promised Land. God performed many miracles to show his authority over all the Egyptian gods. However, the Israelites did not trust God, but complained and grumbled. Because of their constant unbelief, God had to discipline them for 40 years as they wandered in the wilderness. We have come to the end of the 40 years as Moses prepared God's people to enter into the Promised Land. It is here in Deuteronomy 6, where Moses spells out how the Israelites can be successful as they enter the Promised Land. [Let us turn our Bible to Deut. 6:1-2, "Now this is the commandment- the statutes and the rules that the Lord your God command me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long." Here God commanded Moses to teach God's Commandments to the Israelites.]

A. Teaching God's Commandments to the Israelites (vv.1-2)

At Mt. Sinai, God gave His people the Law, where they were taught how to have a relationship with God and how to have a relationship with others. A summary of the Law is found in the 10 Commandments, where the first four commandments are focused on building a relationship with God and the final six commandments on building a relationship with others. God wants Moses to teach the Israelites the Law, which is God's Word. It is a

blueprint in living a fulfilled life. There are two purposes why Moses is to teach God's Word. The first purpose is so that they will obey them. He makes it clear that it is not for the purpose of passing information to them, but rather that they may do them in the land. It is not enough to know God's Word, but to practice them.

1. So that they will obey them

This principle of obedience to God's Word is repeated over and over again in the first 3 verses. Moses said it in verse 1, "that you may do them" v. 2 "by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, and v.3 "be careful to do them." It is not until we apply God's Word will we experience transformation. Going to church, attending a small group, going to Sunday school are all good, but we will not be transformed until we take God's Word to heart and practice it.

ILLUSTRATION: During premarital counseling, I explained how marriages are falling apart among the non-Christians as well as the Christians. Some of the Christians are not taught what the Bible teaches about married life and those that have been taught have not put it into practice. It is one thing to know what God's Word says and another to practice it. It is not that easy. We need the Lord to help us to be careful to do them. [There is another purpose for teaching the Law to the Israelites so that they and their future generations will fear God. We see this in the beginning of verse 2, "that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son."]

2. So that they and their future generations will fear God

God not only expected them to obey the God's Word, but to fear the Lord. What does it mean to fear the Lord? We need to revere Him, be in awe of Him. Too often we take God for granted and only go to him when we are in hot water. The reason why is because we only know about God and not really know God personally. The more we know God, the more we will value him. It is not enough to know God intellectually, but experientially.

ILLUSTRATION: During the past month, it has been the most difficult and stressful month in my life. I had to deal with family issues and church issues. I was exhausted physically as well as emotionally. It has caused me to see my inadequacy and to put my trust in the all-powerful God, who is in control and loves me. God helped me to see the sun beyond the dark clouds. Many times, we are anxious over so many things that are out of our control. We are to pray and ask God for wisdom to do that which is within my control. For all that is out of our control, we need to turn it to the Lord. We need to fear God.

APPLICATION: There is no short cut in experiencing God personally unless we spend the time to connect with the Lord. One of the best ways is to have regular time with the Lord. The Word reveals who God is. One of the best places to understand who God is, is to study the Psalms. By reading God's Word daily and meditating on it, we have more confidence to go before him with our uncertainties. The more difficult the problem we have, the more opportunity God can shine for us. God wants to display his glory. May we recognize our inadequacy and God's infinite adequacy as we learn to fear Him.

Let's take a look at v.2 again and see what many might overlook: "that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son." Notice who is to fear the Lord? You, your son and your son's son. We are responsible in passing our faith to the next two generations. For some, we cannot wait until our child is 18 and they get out of our house. But we have a responsibility as parents to be the primary spiritual influencers of our family. We are to obey and fear God and to teach our children to obey and fear God. We do not stop there. We are to partner with our children to influence our grandchildren to obey and fear God. We are responsible in equipping our children and grandchildren. May we be intentional in making a difference in the future generations.

APPLICATION: The church also recognizes the importance of the next generations. Many churches are dying. Members are just getting older. They are not reaching the next generation. I thank God that we have growing next generation. There are 60 kids under 6 in the English Congregation. There is a baby boom. Part of our present vision is to expand our facility so that we can better minister to the families. Families are so critical in our society today. Everyone desires a loving marriage and families. However, there are so few that experience it. Many do not have any ideas in building a wholesome intimate marriage and families. Many are coming to the church to learn how. We at HCC are committed to equipping couples to have an intimate marriage and to equipping parents to train up their children to believe in Christ and to follow His Word. This year, we have set up marriage mentors for young couples. We have also set up dads' accountability group to train dads. We have equipped parents through Faith Path teaching them how to train their children as they grow from toddlers to college. We want to expand our facilities so that we can better meet families in our community.

[God goes on in vv.2b-3 to describe three results in obeying and fearing God. "By keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey." In this second section, Moses is describing the results in obeying and fearing God. There are three benefits: long life, good life and abundant life.]

B. Describing the results in obeying and fearing God (vv.2-3)

1. Long life

God's Word is a manual for life. God makes it clear how we can have an intimate relationship with God as well as those around us. He is the one that created us. He knows us inside out and understands how we operate. The Word of God consists of the blueprint to life.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was in seminary, I purchased the first portable computer made by Osborne in 1982. It was like the size of a sewing machine with a 5.25 screen with a reader that read floppy discs that holds 64k. If I follow and do what the manual tells me to do, it works exactly what it said it will do. If I push control P, it will print that file. Why does it do exactly what it says it will do? Because the one that wrote the manual is the one that designed the computer. Life is like this. We can randomly punch the keyboard and nothing happens. Periodically, we get fortunate and it does what we want. But most of the time, it is a very frustrating experience. However, if we choose to read the manual and obey what it says, it will give good results. Life can be long. Life can be good when we follow the manual for life in the Bible. God also promises us

abundant life. (John 10:10b) “I give you life and life more abundantly.” Embrace God’s Word; don’t only read it, but practice it. We will experience fulfilled life because God is the designer of life and he wrote a manual for us to enjoy life.

2. Good life
3. Abundant life

[Moses goes on to in vv.4-5 to explain the greatest commandment of all. Let’s read v.4-5, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”]

C. Explaining the greatest commandment (vv.4-5)

1. Understand who God is: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

This verse has been called the Shema, from the Hebrew word translated “hear” in the beginning of verse 4. It implies “to heed, to listen closely for the purposes of obedience.” Hearing and obeying go hand in hand. You really did not hear it unless you follow through with it. The statement in this verse is the basic confession of faith in Judaism. Before giving the greatest commandment in v.5, Moses makes it clear who God is? There is one God and He alone is God. Back in the ancient Near East, the surrounding nations were polytheistic, where they worshipped many gods. All these “gods” act independently and not in harmony. Therefore, the pagan worshippers could never be sure that their god will protect them from the wrath of another god. There is much uncertainty for security. However, the Jews worship a monotheistic God. The Lord is one. The unchanging nature of God makes Him radically dependable.

We also note here that the Lord is a personal God. He is our God. He is not someone way out there that does not care about us. There is no other God beside Him. He knows us and care for us. In verse 5, we are commanded to **love** the Lord with all of our heart, soul, and might. Each of the Israelites is to love God with every fiber of their being and it should be clearly demonstrated to our family members.

2. Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and might.

Jesus also reiterates this greatest command in Matthew 22:37-40, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” These two commandments is a summary of the whole Law. And loving God with our whole being is the greatest command of them all.

In biblical Hebrew, the heart was less the seat of the emotions (as in modern times) than it was the focus of the intellect and will. It is a conscious choice of ours to love God.

ILLUSTRATION: When we love someone, we do unusual things. We make ultimate sacrifice for the one whom we love. We have seen Jesus loving us so much that he gives up his life on our behalf by dying on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins.

My brother was dating someone in the Bay Area when he was living in Los Angeles. Every Friday, he would make that six hours drive after work up the Bay Area to see her. He only gets a few hours of sleep on Friday night before he gets up early on Saturday to see his girlfriend. Then on Sunday, he would drive back to LA for work. He did that for

10 months, every week. When you are in love, you make unusual sacrifices for the one whom you love.

APPLICATION: I thank Lon Kai, who gets up extra early to drive the Rice students to worship service. I thank Joey Chen, who does the audio, for sacrificing time to come to church to for worship rehearsals. I thank Simon and Grace Lam visiting and encouraging Ellie when I was away caring for my parents. I thank Betty for being available to teach last minute when a Sunday school teacher calls in sick. Some of you have taken your friend to the hospital in the middle of the night. All of these acts are based on love. We are to make a willful decision to love God with every fiber of our being recognizing who He is and what He has done for us.

The key to being successful in the Promised Land is to obey the Word and to fear God. God does not want to stop there. He wants us to pass our faith down to the next two generations- first to our children and then to our grandchildren. Our parenting is not over when our children turn 18, we continue to equip and partner with our children to influence the next generation. As grandparents, we need to go beyond helping with child care and playing with our grandchildren. We are to be intentional Christian grandparents, where we partner with our children to influence the next generation.

[How are we to do that? Let us read vv.6-7, “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”]

D. Passing your faith to the next generations (vv.6-9)

1. Modeling intentionally

Before we can pass along anything successful to others, we ourselves need to possess it, embrace it, and practice it. It needs to be on our heart. We have to experience it. We cannot teach others that which we have not learned. God’s commandments are not just a list of do’s and don’ts. It needs to be an integral part of our lives. It should be a description of who we are. Unless we walk our talk, our children will not follow us consistently. Lessons are more caught than taught. We must model intentionally to our children and our grandchildren.

APPLICATION: Christianity is not a passive faith. It requires actions in our part. The next generation needs to see their parents following Christ fervently as well as seeing them struggle in following Jesus. May our faith be lived out throughout the week. Too often, we tend to live compartmental lives. On Sunday, we behave one way and the rest of the week, we behave another way. We can fool those at church, but we cannot fool our children and grandchildren. May we live out our faith consistently whether we are at home, church, work, or play.

How do we do that? May we cherish God’s Word by talking about it and obeying it. The kids know what is important to us when we talk about it all the time. Do we talk about God? Do we share how God has blessed us, protected us, provided us, and answered our prayers? Do we talk about God’s Word and practice it? Do we apologize to our kids when we make a mistake? By doing so, we show our kids that we fear God and love God. When we live out what we believe, then we can be effective in teaching

and equipping our children. How are we to teach our children? Teach them diligently. In another translation, it says, “Impress upon your children.” Our faith in God is so important that we make it a priority. It needs to be intentional and consistent.

2. Teaching diligently

This is serious business. Our moral compass has been distorted by the culture, which influences us drastically. As a result, it is very difficult for our children to keep their faith in the midst of a spiritual battle at school and play. You might say, “My kids are okay because we go to church.” However, there is a huge percentile of young people that grow up in the church that depart from their faith when they go to college. Too often, our children only know about God, but not experience God where God is an integral part of our lives.

Parents are to teach their children, not the church. Children are only at church for a couple of hours a week, but they are at home over 100 hours a week. There are so many more opportunities to influence their children at home. It all comes down to being diligent or intentional. Training our kids does not happen automatically. We as parents are to be the primary spiritual influencers and we must plan for it. The job of the church is to equip the parents, but it is the parents who implement the training.

There is no short cut in training our children or influencing them. It will take time. When can we influence our children? It should be organic throughout the day. First and foremost, we need to be talking with our children. Statistically, parents only spend 7 minutes/day in meaningful conversation with their kids. There is no way we can pass our faith by doing that. Rules without relationship will result in rebellion. We must have a relationship before we can influence. Spend time playing, talking and hanging out with our children. We are responsible for discipling them. They are to be most precious to us. That takes intentionality. We need to be looking for opportunity to build deeper relationship. Look for opportunity to talk about God. Look for opportunity to talk about values. We need to be ready to share what God is doing in our lives.

We are to take the time to teach them how to live according to the Scripture and we have to live authentically in the very things we are teaching. We are to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Moses brings to our attention four periods during our daily lives that we can do that: when we talk with them, when we walk with them. One practical way is when we drive them around to different activities. We do spend a lot of time with our kids in the car. Take full advantage of that time. You have some good alone time with them. Be intentional in bringing up various issues to discuss. Two other times that we can train our kids are when they lie down and when they rise in the morning. Bedtimes are precious times. Kids tend to be more open to listen as they wind down. Review your day and thank God for various positive things that have happened. Pray together for needs of the family. In the morning, as we start the day, say a prayer with your children. Remind them of one value to remember like “be kind to your classmates.”

- a. When you talk with them
- b. When you walk with them
- c. When you lie down

d. When you rise up

If the Israelites were to be successful in the Promised Land, they were to love God completely, which would motivate them to obey God's commands and to fear God. To be successful in the long run, they must teach their future generations to do likewise. Just as Moses challenged the parents to equip and train their children, we recognize one of our main goal at HCC is to equip our members to obey God's Word and to fear God. One of the most important equipping responsibility is to make disciple-making families.