

"Hear, O Israel"

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

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Introduction:

»PPT» A number of years ago, a man by the name of Robert Fulghum touched the lives of many people with a short essay entitled, **"All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten."** According to Mr. Fulghum, all of life's most important lessons were learned at a very young age, as he says, the most important lessons were learned, **"...not at the top of the graduate-school mountain, but there in the sandbox."** He says that more adults should try to apply today what they learned at a very young age. Among other things, he learned in kindergarten to...

- ***Share everything.***
- ***Play fair.***
- ***Don't hit people.***
- ***Put things back where you found them.***
- ***Clean up your own mess.***
- ***Don't take things that aren't yours.***
- ***Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.***
- ***Wash your hands before you eat.***
- ***Flush.***
- ***Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.***
- ***Take a nap every afternoon.***
- ***When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.***

He goes on to say, ***"Think what a better world it would be if all - the whole world - had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down... for a nap. Or if all governments had a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess. And it is still true, no matter how old you are - when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together."***

A very interesting essay—there is a lot of truth in there! And so much is familiar to us, because so much of it can probably be described as "common sense." And yet we know from experience that common sense is not always very common! We did not learn it from reading a book. We did not learn it from careful research and study. We did not learn it by writing a research paper on it. But we learned common sense

by seeing it modeled for us over and over again by people we looked up to—teachers, and leaders in the church, but especially from our parents.

As we think about this idea of learning the basics from our parents, I would like for us to go back and look at a critical situation in the history of God's people. The Israelites had just finished forty years of wandering in the wilderness. They were less than a month away from the death of Moses and the leadership of Joshua, where, in just a few more weeks, he would lead them across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

We know from the Scriptures that there were giants in the land. In fact, there were more than 40 other nations or tribes already in the land of Canaan. Many of them were heavily armed—they were dug in. There would be many battles over the coming years—it would be a very difficult time.

Does God tell them to beef up their defense budget? Does God tell them to start stockpiling weapons? Does God tell them to get their finances all squared away and to prepare for a great depression? No, He does not, because in the middle of this very dangerous time of transition, God is about to tell the people of Israel to teach His word to their children! And what a great lesson for us to consider here this morning!

There are so many lessons from Joshua and Judges and what is about to happen next that we can apply to our lives today—but certainly the importance of teaching our children the word of God has to be at the top of that list. Because when we get right down to it, parents are the ones who are ultimately responsible for the spiritual health of their children. And in this election season, we need to remember that the greatest problem we have in this nation will not be fixed by who is in the White House, it must be fixed by the parents in our house!

With that in mind, I would like for us to look together at all **29 verses** of **Deuteronomy 6**. **»PPT»** In our pew Bibles, the passage is found starting on **page 297**. The passage includes one of the most famous and most popular Scriptures in the entire Old Testament. And again, these are the words of Moses—some of his last words before passing the baton on to Joshua. If you will, please look with me at **Deuteronomy 6**...

- ¹ ***"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it,***
- ² ***so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.***
- ³ ***"O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD,***

the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

7 "You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up.

8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

10 "Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build,

11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied,

12 then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

13 "You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

14 "You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you,

15 for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

16 "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah.

17 "You should diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you.

18 "You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give your fathers,

19 by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.

20 "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the LORD our God commanded you?'

21 then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand.

22 'Moreover, the LORD showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household;

- ²³ *He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.'*
- ²⁴ *"So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today.*
- ²⁵ *"It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as He commanded us.*

As we look back over this entire chapter, we will not really be looking at any new and profound lessons, but I would like for us to use this chapter as a reminder. The key seems to come in **verses 4-5**, **"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is 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."** Such a simple message, and yet it is such a challenge to pass this message along to the next generation. So as we face this challenge, as we face a wicked outside world as they did, I would like for us to consider the urgency of the words of Moses to the people of Israel. When it comes to passing along our faith to the next generation, I would like for us to focus in on two very basic ideas.

- I. First of all, we notice from Deuteronomy 6 that THOSE WHO WILL DO THE PASSING ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO HAVE THEIR OWN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. In other words, before we can pass it on, before we can teach it to others, WE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE WHAT IT MEANS TO BELIEVE IN THE ONE TRUE GOD. »PPT»**

Over the next two weeks, we will see a lot of races being held at the Olympics. We can think about the relay races where the runners have to work together to get the baton around the track. I am holding one of the batons that we use in some of the relays up at Beaver Creek Bible Camp. This looks like some kind of a Nerf version. It is soft—we do not want to have any campers to be impaled by a baton. But the point is: That handoff is so incredibly important. If you can remember this from PE class in high school, the handoff has to be practiced over and over again. The handoff is such a critical moment, and obviously half of the responsibility falls on the one who is holding the baton. Before he can hand it off, he has to have it in the first place!

As we apply this idea to our Christian faith (and even to the world in general), someone has said, **"The trouble with the younger generation is the older generation."** Sometimes we tend to place the blame on the children, **"Oh, the teenagers are so bad these days!"** And yet we notice here in **Deuteronomy 6** that Moses places a great deal of responsibility on the parents. We want our children to believe in God. We want our children to respect the word of God. We want our children to love God. And realizing that this is true, the most important step begins with all of us as parents. As Moses says in **verse 6**, **"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart."** Moses, therefore, starts with us as parents. Moses wants our hearts to be dedicated to God in every way—we are to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, and might. Before we can pass along the

word of God to our children, before we can teach our children to love the Lord, we must start by knowing God and by learning the word of God ourselves.

As parents, whether we always know it or not, we are being watched very carefully. Every once in a while, I may hear a little voice from the back seat, **"Daddy, if the speed limit is 65, why are you going 70?"** Well, that is a good reminder—that is a good question! And if the little ones are watching our speed on the highway, they are also watching just about everything else. They see us reading the word of God. They see the way we behave. They will know it if we truly love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, and strength. They notice so much.

With that in mind, someone has said, **"Why is it that in this nation we spend so much more time with our homes, our cars, our entertainment, and our finances than we do with our children; to whom one day we will relinquish it all?"** A very good question! What good will it do to bring up a child in the nicest house, in the finest clothes, with the very best education, on the most amazing soccer team in the land, in the greatest nation, to give him the greatest job in order to get the nicest things; only for him to end up in the grave, in the most beautiful casket, standing before the judgment of a God he does not even know? What good will it do?

Our greatest responsibility as parents is to demonstrate what it means to have a personal relationship with God. Thomas Aquinas once told his students, **"Preach Christ everywhere you go, and if necessary, use words."** Back in 1904, President Woodrow Wilson said, **"If you wish your children to be Christians, you must really take the trouble to be Christians yourselves."** Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, **"Who you are speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you're saying."** I am also reminded of a young boy who asked his father, **"Daddy, what is a Christian?"** The dad replied by saying, **"A Christian is a person who loves and obeys God. He loves his friends, his neighbors, and even his enemies. He is kind and gentle and prays a lot. He looks forward to going to heaven and thinks that knowing God is better than anything on earth. That, my son, is a Christian."** And then the boy said, **"Daddy, have I ever seen a Christian?"** That little boy did not need the dictionary definition—the words meant nothing—he needed to see someone actually living the Christian life!

As I was preparing for this morning's lesson, I read about someone who had three pictures on top of his desk. On the far left there was a picture of the hospital where he was born. On the far right there was a picture of the cemetery where he would likely be buried. And in the middle there was a picture of his wife and children. Those pictures reminded that man of where his life began, where it will end, and what really matters in between. That handoff, the exchange of the baton from one generation to the next, is so incredibly important. We are living in a society where being "right" is about the only wrong thing we can do! Being "exclusive" is an abomination in our world—just as it was as the Israelites were getting ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses would tell us to live our faith. As he says (starting in **verse 4**), **"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is 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. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. We are to demonstrate the Christian faith.

II. As we look back at Deuteronomy 6, we not only find that we are to have a personal relationship with God, but we also find that once that relationship has been established, WE ARE TO ACTUALLY PASS THAT BATON—WE ARE TO ACTUALLY TEACH OUR CHILDREN. WE ARE TO PASS IT ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION. »PPT»

Again, we cannot teach what we do not know. But once we know it, we have the privilege of passing it on. Sometimes we hear the debate: Are children basically good or are they basically evil. I believe the Bible teaches that children are a clean slate. Of course we don't use slate anymore, so maybe we can say that children can be compared to blank disc, and as they grow up they have the freedom to choose to go in one of two very different directions.

In verse 7, when speaking of the words that have come from God, Moses says, "***You shall teach them diligently to your sons....***" And so there is some teaching involved. Just living the Christian life is not quite enough. There has to be a focused effort on education. We see a number of action words in these verses. We are to ***teach*** and ***talk*** as we ***sit*** and ***walk*** and ***lie down*** and ***rise up***.

Before we get too far into this, I would like for us to honestly think back over the past week, and let us think about all of the discussions that we had with our children. What did we talk about? What was the focus of our conversations? Did we talk about God? Did we talk about money? Did we talk about cell phone minutes? Did we talk about work, or sports, or things? What did we focus on as we talked with our children this week? You know, our children know what is important based at least partially on what we say to them.

Moses says, therefore, that we must teach the word of God to our children. The word of God needs to be an emphasis in our discussions. Have we taught the word of God this week? And coming half an hour late to Bible class on a Sunday morning does not fulfill the obligation. The last 15 minutes of a Bible class does not do it! Have we emphasized the word of God?

In fact, Moses says (in verse 7) that we must teach the word of God "***diligently.***" As I understand it, the word we translate here as "***diligently***" goes back to a Hebrew word that refers to the sharpening of a sword or to the sharpening of an arrow. Literally, the word refers to being "***sharp, precise, and to the point.***" My grandfather was a machinist—he is the one in our family who always sharpens the knives, and scissors, and mower blades, and screwdrivers, and chisels, and whatever else needs sharpening, and I have taken it upon myself to try to inherit that ability. Every time I can, I try to get a lesson—I try to absorb that knowledge. And now when the "Northern Unit" of our family gets together, sometimes they have been known to bring their knives for me to sharpen. Sharpening a knife is a real skill. It takes patience and time. It takes repetition at the proper angle—over and over

again. Teaching the word of God to our children is a lot like that. The word of God has to be repeated over and over again. That's what the word means—to sharpen—over and over again.

As we look at **verse 7**, the talking we do about the word of God does not appear to be a lecture. I do not see any kind of official "family devotional" time here (not that that would be wrong or anything), I do not see a sermon here, but it appears in **verse 7** that we are simply to talk about the word of God at every natural opportunity. God's truth applies in every situation. And so we are to be aware of what is going on at school, and in the neighborhood, and we are to use those opportunities for teaching the word of God. We can use current events to show that God's way is always right and that God's word can protect us from a lifetime of pain and trouble.

Jesus was the master at doing this. Jesus took His illustrations from everyday life. Jesus saw some birds, and He taught a lesson about not being concerned about the daily cares of life. He did the same with flowers, and trees, and sheep, and wolves, and camels, and pigs, and foxes, and sowing, and reaping, and plowing, and harvesting.

We can use a shopping trip to reinforce what the Bible teaches about honesty. We can use what is on television each night to point out the dangers of what we see going on in the world. Even the inspection stickers on the gas pump remind us of how the Bible warns against using false weights and measures. We can use our own wedding album to pass along what the word of God says about sexual purity leading up to and including marriage. We want our children to know that God's way is best. We want our children to know that God's book is the standard. We want our children to know that God's book is a law that stands above any human court. And so when the high school biology teacher starts off class by saying that **"only idiots believe in creation,"** our children will know better! Our children will already know that only an idiot would make a statement like that!

We are to teach the word of God when we sit in the house. In our house, we sit down together when we eat. What a great opportunity to be thankful for the food that God has provided. We are to teach the word of God when we walk by the way. When is the last time we went on a walk with our children? We can use those walks to talk about the word of God. We are to teach the word of God when we lie down. What a great opportunity to tell a bedtime story or to encourage them to read the word of God on their own or to read it together. We are to teach the word of God when we rise up. And again, when we get together in the morning for breakfast, what a great opportunity to praise God for the night of rest and for once again providing food for the day!

Conclusion & Invitation:

There is so much more we could discuss about this passage, but the basic idea is that we are, 1.) To have a personal relationship with God, and then, 2.) That those of us

as parents are to do everything possible to pass that baton of faith on to the next generation.

Probably for most of us, this passage is either very encouraging or very discouraging. On one hand, maybe we can say to ourselves, **"Alright, it seems that things are going pretty well."** But on the other hand, maybe we are saying to ourselves, **"It is too late."** And yet regardless of where we fall along that spectrum, Moses would encourage us to start from where we are. We do not need to look back with regret at the time we have lost in the past, but we can start fresh right now. That is the way it is with the grace of God. We are allowed to start over. We can focus in on our own relationship with God—we can make sure that we personally love God with all of our heart, soul, and might. We can personally make a renewed commitment to study and appreciate the word of God. And then we can turn around and make a special effort to pass that baton on to the next generation. If our own children are grown and gone, we can focus on others who are young and interested in what the word of God has to say—grandchildren, nieces, nephews, neighbors—the little children in the Bible class program here at this congregation. We have Bible classes right now in need of teachers—what a great opportunity! We can do our part to share the word of God with those who are younger.

As the apostle Paul told the young preacher Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:2**, ***"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."***

The Bible teaches that we accept the grace of God through our obedience to the good news. The good news is that Jesus died, He was buried, and He was raised up on the third day. We respond to that message by turning away from sin, by allowing ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins, and by being lifted up out of the water to live the Christian life. If you would like to obey the gospel, please let us know as we stand and sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org