

Too Much Sugar, Too Many Presents

December 11, 2011

It's a privilege to be here with you this morning.

For those who don't know me, I'm Trey Garner. I'm the pastor of our Children's Ministries here at Faith.

I've been here for a little over twelve years now, and I spend most of my Sunday mornings ministering to 1st – 5th Graders.

I've found that there's one big similarity between teaching kids and teaching adults. It has a lot to do with holding someone's attention.

The major difference is that with kids you've got to settle them down and with adults you have to keep them awake.

So, in an effort to help you stay awake this morning, from time to time, I'll randomly flash an image up here on the screen just to keep you on your toes.

It might be an image like this (image #1)...

It might be an image like this (image #2)...

Or it might be an image like this (image 3)...

You know, I actually don't have any other random images that I'm planning to show you. It's just that I've been sitting on that one for a while, and I wanted to find a way to work it in.

So, with that out of the way, let me ask you.

Have you ever seen anything at Christmastime resembling *this* (image #4).

What about this? (image #5)

You ever seen this? (image #6)

Or how about this? (image #7)

Well, that one may be a bit over the top. But those are obviously images of kids (composite image) who are really excited about Christmas.

And I'm sure we've all had at least some experience with kids who were overjoyed about receiving the gift they really wanted.

Or kids who believed that Christmas was essentially Halloween, Part 2: you get dressed up, you get all kinds of sweets, you still visit people's houses—you just stay longer.

No question about it—Christmas can be a really fun time for kids.

But Christmas can also be fraught disappointment. I'm sure we've all had some experience with the child who *didn't* receive the present he wanted for Christmas.

What's that like?

Well, it's a lot like the 3 year-old whose parents gave him books instead of toys for Christmas. Take a look.

I don't know if you could make out everything that boy said, but the gist of it was that he *hated* receiving books for Christmas.

So strong, in fact, was his hatred for the books he received that he declared, "Poo! I say Poo!"

From a three-year-old, it doesn't get much stronger than that.

I mean, somebody get out the bar of soap.

You know, it's interesting. I first saw that video on YouTube, and one of the comments made about the video was..."Meanwhile in Africa..."

And I thought those simple words provided some pretty good perspective on that reaction.

The point I'm driving at here is that...you can tell a lot about the heart of a child at Christmastime.

Jesus said...

Matthew 12:34

For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

The way children react to their circumstances tells you something about the things they value.

And I'm not just picking on the boy in the video. I'm also talking about the kids who go jumping out of their skin over receiving the latest and greatest thing they wanted.

You can tell a lot about the things *they* value as well.

And you say, "Pastor Trey, you are a killjoy. For crying out loud, can't you just let the kids enjoy Christmas."

Hey, I'm not suggesting that we need to turn kids into some collection of stone-faced automatons who never find joy in anything.

Rather, I'm arguing with we need to help kids find joy in the right things by instilling them with the right perspective.

With that in mind, let me ask you to open your Bible to that great Christmas passage of Deuteronomy chapter 6.

That's found on page 137 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

If you're familiar with the book Deuteronomy, then you know that it says absolutely nothing about Christmas, but it does say a lot about training kids.

And I hope we'll be able to mine some of those principles out of this passage today.

This year, our church's theme has been **Living Life Together...**

All year long, we've been focusing on the issue of strengthening relationships for the purpose of glorifying God and advancing the mission to which He has called us.

That's because we believe that where deeper relationships are present greater growth takes place.

And I hope that you would be able to look back over the course of the past few months to determine whether you've made progress... whether you've grown in deepening your relationships.

For the last few weeks, we've been discussing how to strengthen your relationships with...**That Crazy Family of Yours**

You will probably be spending more time with your family in the next month because of school breaks and vacation days from work...and you'll also be spending more time with extended family because of people traveling all over the country to see one another...

And throughout this series, we're considering how God's Word can help us strengthen these relationships.

A couple of weeks ago, Pastor Viars talked about how this time of year **'Tis the Season for OCD...**and he discussed avoiding perfectionism in our Christmas celebrations.

Then, last week Pastor Dutton talked about **Loving Your Outlaws...**how to share the love of Christ with your extended family.

Today, we're going to allow for the possibility that the craziest members may not be people that you see only occasionally.

The craziest members of your family may live right in your home.

Now, we should get this on the table...the craziest member of your family may be you.

I know that's certainly the case in my home.

But often times, you know and I know that it's the kids who win the crazy prize, right?

So, this morning we're going to look at Deuteronomy chapter 6 to help us figure out how to avoid a Christmas that's characterized by **Too Much Sugar, Too Many Presents**

Now, I know that I'm speaking to a diverse group this morning, and that not everyone here has children in the home.

But I want to suggest to you that there are principles in what we're about to study that will have application to all of us.

Clearly, if you've currently got children in the home, I want to encourage you to think about how these principles ought to impact your life and your approach to parenting.

Maybe that's not your situation. Maybe you're in a life situation where you once had children in the home, but they've grown up and moved out...or maybe they've grown up and...forgotten to move out...

Maybe you're a grandparent...or hope to be a grandparent...

If that's the case with you, I would encourage you to think about the ways in which these principles ought to impact your relationship with your grandkids...or the grandkids you may eventually have.

Maybe you're in a situation where you don't have kids yet, but you hope to someday.

On some level, I'm most excited about talking to you...because you're in a place where you get to plan for the kind of parent you want to be.

If that's your situation, I would encourage you to think about these principles and begin working to establish the life habits that are going to prepare you to work with the children that God may choose to give you down the road.

And maybe you're here this morning, and you don't fit into any of the categories I just described.

You need to know that these are important principles for you too, because there's a sense in which the responsibility for discipling the kids in our church belongs not just to their parents, but to you also.

Throughout the Bible, we see the model of mature believers training younger ones to grow in their faith.

And we are called to...

Hebrews 10:24

...stimulate one another to love and good deeds

That includes the kids that are part of our community of faith.

Now, there's no question that the primary responsibility for spiritual training rests on parents, but you have a role to play in that as well.

Okay, so let's turn our attention to Deuteronomy 6.

Before we read this passage, I want to provide you with some context to help you understand what we're about to read.

This passage was written sometime during the 15th B.C. by a man named Moses.

If you're familiar with the Old Testament, then you know that Moses was the prophet selected by God to deliver the Israelites from 400 years of slavery in Egypt.

Moses was then to guide them to their new home, the land which God had promised them, a land flowing with milk and honey.

But the words of this text weren't spoken to the Israelites immediately upon their departure from Egypt.

Why not?

Because a funny thing happened on the way to the Promised Land...the Israelites made a series of poor choices.

They rebelled against the Lord. And as a result of their rebellion, they were forced to wander in the wilderness for a period of 40 years...until everyone over the age of twenty that was part of that rebellious generation died.

So now, at the beginning of Deuteronomy, it's finally time for the next generation to end their wilderness wanderings.

Here they stood on the border of the Promised Land, poised to do what their parents had refused to do.

And before entering the land, Moses gets everybody together and gives them one final reminder about the way in which God had called them to live.

And the question was...would they do it? Would they choose to live by the Lord's instructions?

That's where we pick up. Let's look at Deuteronomy, chapter 6, beginning in verse 1.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

"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.

I don't know what it is about that passage, but every time I read it I feel like singing Jingle Bells.

I realize you probably came this morning expecting to study something a little more Christmassy

But I believe this passage teaches us 3 important truths that can help us instill kids with the right perspective this Christmas.

The first truth is that...

I. God has given us a mission.

Look there in verse 1. Moses says...

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...

Deuteronomy 6:3

O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it...

It's like Moses is the guy on the tape recording saying, "Your mission should you choose to accept it..."

And it's like we're Peter Graves and you can hear the *Mission Impossible* theme song.

I realize like forty percent of you have no idea who Peter Graves is. For the sake of this analogy, you're Tom Cruise.

Peter Graves is the pilot from *Airplane*.

But we've been given a mission to fulfill. And...

A. What is that mission?

Verse 5...

Deuteronomy 6:5

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

That's what we've been called to do. We are called to love the Lord our God.

That is to be the driving pursuit of our lives. It is to be the goal of every thought that we think, every word that we speak, every action we undertake.

And you say, "Pastor Trey, Moses was talking to the Israelites. They were God's chosen people. That was *their* mission. I'm all for loving God, but is that really supposed to be *my* mission too?"

And what's the answer to that? The answer is... "Uh huh."

And you say, "How do you know?"

We know because Jesus said the same thing.

When one of the Pharisees asked Jesus...

Matthew 22:36-38

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "'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 foremost commandment."

Jesus made it clear that the mission for all who would claim to follow God had not changed.

And by the way, isn't God good to provide us with a mission to pursue?

He didn't have to do that. He could have left us aimlessly casting about on the sea of life...like a ship without a sail...being tossed around here and there by erratic waves of our culture, leaving us to figure out for ourselves what our lives ought to be about.

But he didn't do that. He provided us with a direction to fill our sails, to guide our journey.

One of the big philosophical questions that man has pondered throughout the centuries is... "What is the meaning of life?"

The Christian doesn't have to wrestle with that question because God has provided the answer.

Life is all about loving Him.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it this way. It says...

"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

We are called to love the Lord our God.

But notice that Moses doesn't stop there. Moses answers this question:

B. How are we to love God?

Deuteronomy 6:5

...with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

We are not called to love God in the same way we love our favorite ice cream...

Or the way we love our favorite sports team...How's that working out for us this year Colts fans?

We are called to love God...

1. With our entire being.

He isn't looking for half-hearted, luke-warm followers.

He wants us to be passionate, on-fire, sold-out for Jesus, others before me, God before anyone kinds of followers.

The question I think we have to answer is...

What does that look like? How are we to go about loving Him with our entire being?

One of the answers to that question is...

2. Through obedience to His commands.

In His commentary on the book of Deuteronomy, Peter Craigie says...

The all-encompassing love for God was to find its expression in a willing and joyful obedience of the commandments of God. (*The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Deuteronomy, p. 170.*)

That's why Jesus said...

John 14:15

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Throughout Scripture, we see a direct connection between our love *for* God and our obedience *to* God.

What Moses was saying to the Israelites, and what Jesus was saying to His disciples was...

"Don't go around saying that you love God, putting yourself out there like you are tight with the Almighty...if you're not willing to obey His commands."

Do you know what the Bible calls someone who has heard the Word of God but has refused to act on it?

The Bible calls that person a fool.

Matthew 7:26-27

Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.

Is there anyone here who would say, “Yeah, sign me up for that?”

We are called to love God...with our entire being...through obedience to His commands...

But there’s another way we’re to carry out our love for God, and that’s...

3. By serving others

In addition to the connection Scripture makes between love and obedience, the Bible also makes a clear connection between our love for God and our demonstrations of that love to other people.

A few minutes ago, I mentioned Matthew 22, when a Pharisee asked Jesus about the greatest commandment.

Not only did Jesus say...

Matthew 22:37-38

“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 foremost commandment.”

But he went on to say...

Matthew 22:39-40

The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

So great is the connection between loving God and serving others that Jesus said, “These two commands sum up then entire Old Testament.”

That’s like the best version of Cliffs Notes ever.

In Matthew, chapter 25, Jesus speaks about the judgment to come and he explains what that judgment would be like for those who faithfully and sacrificially sought to serve others. And he says,

Matthew 25:40

Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.

So, let me ask you to write this on the tablet of your heart.

If I love God, then I will serve others.

Say that with me. “If I love God, then I will serve others.”

Now, don't say that like your pastor made you say that. Say that like you mean it.

"If I love God, then I will serve others."

And you say, "Pastor Trey, I thought this was supposed to be about the kids. Right now, it sounds a whole lot like you're talking to me."

You know...it does sound a lot like that, doesn't it?

You realize that kids need to see an active love for God modeled in *your* life if they're going to live it out for themselves.

You can get away with telling them to love God and serve others for only so long before they start asking, "Hey, are my mom and dad doing that? Are grandma and grandpa doing that?" This loving God and serving others thing...it is hard work.

And if kids are asked to do something that cuts against the grain of their natural desires, they're going to want to see confirmation that they're not the only ones doing it.

They're going to want to see if the people around them...the people who are telling what to do and how to live...they're going to want to see if those people are living in a way that's consistent with their instructions.

Most kids have a pretty astute sense of hypocrisy. And if they figure out that your practice doesn't match up with your preaching, it'll take them about two seconds to conclude that they shouldn't have to practice it either.

So, we've got to lead by example.

Now, assuming that we'll be willing to take the appropriate steps to do that, let's talk about some things we can do this Christmas to help kids act on these principles.

And let's talk first about the things they can do right here...

a. At church

The marvelous thing about preaching a message like this on a weekend like this is that there are hundreds of examples of parents from our church who have done this in the past couple of days.

This weekend, we've had all kinds of kids running around here in full Israelite mode serving as part of the Living Nativity.

They've been out there in Bethlehem hocking their wares, trying to see how many shekels they can get for a plastic kumquat.

They've been serving alongside their moms and dads handing out CD's, directing traffic, you name it.

And I don't know if you noticed, but it's been a wee bit chilly outside.

They've been standing out there in the cold...wearing about 14 layers...when most of the rest of the kids in town have been indoors cuddled up to a nice toasty XBOX.

And these kids have done it for the sake of the gospel...because God has given us a mission

And part of that mission is to...

Matthew 5:16

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

And the Living Nativity is not the only thing families have been doing around here this weekend.

Yesterday was the distribution day for *Christmas for Everyone*. That ministry is designed to provide gifts for the children of low-income families.

There were a number of parents and kids from our church over at the Community Center yesterday assisting some of the hundreds of guests we were able to serve through that ministry.

I know some of you sponsored a *Christmas for Everyone* child, and purchased some of the gifts on that child's Christmas list.

And when you went shopping, I know that many of you took your kids along.

Sure, it probably would have been faster to go to the store by yourself, but you didn't want to miss the opportunity to help your child get a taste for how exciting it can be to love God by serving others.

And if you're one of the parents who has gotten your kids involved in serving this Christmas season, I want to say to you, "Way to go."

You are fulfilling your mission.

You have officially earned an imaginary gold star from the Children's Ministries pastor. Treasure it.

But if you're sitting there, and you're thinking to yourself, "Oh, I should have gotten my kids serving this Christmas. Now, it's too late."

No, it's not.

We've got the Living Nativity running for another weekend. Just go to our website, and sign up.

We've got plenty of people serving already, but we'll make room for you.

We don't want you to miss out on the opportunity to help your kids cultivate their love for God.

Now, the church isn't the only place you can help your kids fulfill the mission.

That should also be happening

b. At home

And for the purposes of this discussion, I'm using the term "home" to refer to any place you're going to be together as a family.

That could be your *house*...that could be your *parent's* house...that could be the mall...that could be your car...that could be your Great Aunt Minerva's barn...wherever...

You're likely going to be spending some extra time with your kids this holiday season, and you're going to have the opportunity to observe what's really important to them...to observe the things they value...the things they love.

And the best opportunity you'll have to witness these things is when circumstances don't go their way.

What happens when the cousin your daughter really wanted to see doesn't show up at the family gathering? How does she respond?

What happens when your son has to give up his room so that grandpa will have a place to sleep? What's his reaction like?

What happens when your child is asked to sit quietly while the adults are talking? Hmm?

What happens when your kids don't get the gifts they were hoping for?

Do they stomp around shouting, "Poo! I say poo!"...or the older child equivalent of that expression.

The way they respond tells you what's in their hearts.

If they respond peaceably...with gratitude and joyful flexibility to the situation God has given them, then there's a good chance that your child understands the mission.

But sadly...maybe more often than not...they won't respond that way.

If they respond by whining, or complaining, or throwing some kind of fit when their expectations aren't met, then that's an indication that you've got some work to do.

The first thing you may want to do is write the word "Self" (**Show Self**) on a piece of poster board.

Then, draw a big circle with a line through it (**Show circle with line**).

And post it on the ceiling over his bed so that it's the first thing he sees when he gets up in the morning and the last thing he see before he goes to sleep.

The next thing you may want to do if your child decides to spin off in some anti-Christmas tizzy is show him this video. Take a look.

What do you think? Will that make an impact? “That’ll teach you to value the mission.”

There’s a familiar saying that I think every child ought to memorize. It goes...

There are two choices on the shelf: pleasing God or pleasing self.

You and I are experts in pleasing ourselves. The problem is...so is everyone else.

But the even bigger problem is that God says this life isn’t about us...it’s about Him.

And if we’re going to fulfill the mission God has given us, that’s going to require that requires that we say “No” ourselves and our natural inclinations.

As we head into our Christmas celebrations, we need to prepare our kids with the proper mindset.

If you’re headed over to a family get together, you need to remind your kids that you’re going to serve...not to be served.

You need to tell them...

“If your cousin wants the last sugar cookie, you let him have it.”

“If the trash in the kitchen starts overflowing, you ask if you can take it outside.”

“If your grandma wants to give you the biggest, wettest kiss you’ve ever gotten, you say, ‘Bring it on, Grandma.’”

“If your uncle asks you to pull his finger...”

Well, okay, maybe not that. You’ve got to draw the line somewhere.

But I think you understand the point. We need to help our kids embrace the mission.

Jesus said it this way...

Matthew 16:24

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Now at this point, I think we need to honest and acknowledge the fact that the mission the Lord has given us is a pretty challenging one.

Loving Him with our entire being through obedience to His commands and service to others...that’s a tall order. That is not something that comes naturally to us.

Thankfully, the Lord has provided us with some help...because not only has God given us a mission...

II. God has given us a motivation.

And this passage provides us with a couple of different sources of motivation.

This first is...

A. Who God is

Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel!

And that's like God saying, "Hey, hey, hey, hey...you better pay attention to this."

The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

And you say, "What? What does that mean?"

That statement right there is a big one. These words have been called...

"...the fundamental monotheistic dogma of the Old Testament."

They tell us about the unique nature of our God.

One commentary explains that...

This clause not merely precludes polytheism, but also syncretism which reduces the one absolute God to a national deity, a Baal...and in fact every form of theism and deism, which creates for itself a supreme God according to philosophical abstractions and ideas. For Jehovah, although the absolute One, is not an abstract notion like "absolute being" or "the absolute idea," but the absolute living God, as He made Himself known in His deeds in Israel for the salvation of the whole world.

(Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume One, The Pentateuch, p. 884.)

The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.

Craigie says...

He was not merely first among the gods, as Baal in the Canaanite pantheon, Amon-Re in Egypt, or Marduk in Babylon; he was the one and only God and as such he was omnipotent...when he spoke there was no other to contradict; when he promised, there was no other to revoke that promise; when he warned, there was no other to provide refuge from that warning. *(The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Deuteronomy, p. 169.)*

He was and is God alone.

The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.

So, when we are called to the mission of loving God, we're not loving just anybody.

We are called to love the one, true, eternal Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Judge of all that exists.

That's a fair motivator, don't you think?

But you say, "That's not enough for me. I want more."

Fair enough. How about being motivated by...

B. What God has done

Moses actually begins the book of Deuteronomy with a review of God's gracious acts toward the nation of Israel.

He had chosen them from among all the nations to be a people for His own possession.

He had miraculously delivered them from their bondage as slaves in Egypt.

He had provided for them in their wilderness wanderings, raining down bread from Heaven for their food, giving them victory over their enemies.

He had provided instruction to them for their good, to help them live in ways that would bring joy and blessing.

Time and time again, he had demonstrated His loving care for them.

And in response, He had asked them to love Him.

Now, what about us? Has God done *anything* to motivate our love for Him?

You better believe He has. If the Israelites had reason to love the Lord, how much more then do we?

The Israelites had not yet seen the Messiah. They were awaiting the day when He would be revealed.

We have the benefit of what I like to call the Linus motivation.

Anybody here a fan of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*?

This is my favorite Christmas special. They showed it just this past week.

Frankly, I'm surprised they're still allowed to air it because of the explicit way in which it presents Christ as God.

I realize that most of you have seen it before, but in the event that I'm talking to one of the twelve people who hasn't, let me tell you what happens.

Charlie Brown is depressed...he's disillusioned with the cultural celebrations of Christmas, and he's having trouble finding meaning in the season.

So, after *searching* for meaning in several different places, he finally breaks down and asks for help. And that's when Linus steps to the plate.

Take a look.

Linus is quoting Luke, chapter 2, and I love how he presents it because it's just so simple. But the event itself was anything but simple.

What happened 2000 years ago in Bethlehem was absolutely astounding...

That God, Himself, in the Person of Jesus Christ, would choose to take on human flesh and dwell among a wicked and depraved people for the expressed purpose of dying for our sins...

So that we could be forgiven...

So that we could be redeemed...

So that we could have fellowship with the Lord...

So that we could become joint heirs and fellow partakers in the marvelous promises of God...

That is incredible.

That's motivation to fulfill our mission...to love Him with our entire being through obedience to His commands and service to others.

And to ensure that the mission would be accomplished as the Israelites headed into the Promised Land...and for the decade and centuries to follow, God provided them with another help.

Not only do we have a mission...not only do we have a motivation, but...

III. God has given us a method.

God has told us what we need to do to make sure that we love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9

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.

The idea here is that the Word of God...

the truth about who He is and what He has done...

the truth about who we are and what He expects of us...

the principles that help us to evaluate our world and our circumstances within it...

the wisdom that helps navigate the waters of life skillfully...

The idea here is that these things would be emblazoned on the hearts of God's people...

And that the adults would work diligently at teaching children these truths so that they might embrace them for themselves.

Now, let me pause for a moment and ask you...

Why would that be important? Why would it be important both for us and for the kids we're trying to disciple to have the truths of Scripture imprinted on their minds?

Why wouldn't it simply be enough for our kids to understand the mission to which God has called them...their obligation before Him? Why wouldn't that be enough?

It's because duty without reason breeds rebellion.

Without the foundation of a relationship, their obedience to God's commands would become meaningless.

Craigie says,

The people were to think on [God's statutes] and meditate about them so that obedience would not be a matter of formal legalism, but a response based upon understanding...By understanding the paths of life set down by the commandments, they would at the same time be discovering the way in which God's love for them was given expression.

Our kids need to meditate on the truths of Scripture to flesh out their understanding and appreciation for God.

Without that biblical understanding, the command to obey will result in either legalism or rebellion.

Don't miss that.

Without that biblical understanding, the command to obey will result in either legalism or rebellion.

Through concerted effort, we have to equip kids with biblical framework through that will serve as the grid through which they will view the world.

And you say, Pastor Trey, "I would love to do that. I really would. But I have absolutely no idea how I'm going to work that into my life. Where am I going to find the time?"

Let me give you some encouragement here.

Doing this doesn't require you to quit your job or join a commune.

Moses was encouraging the Israelites to make God conversation a normal and regular part of their lives...

To make spiritual discussions a component of the things they were already doing.

So that whether they were eating dinner together...

or getting ready for bed...

or doing chores around the house...

or travelling to see relatives...

or whatever...

In whatever they were doing, they were to be advancing the spiritual conversation.

And it's the same for us.

Parents, how much time do you spend in the car with your kids jamming out to tunes on the radio?

Do people still do that...jam out to tunes...or is that something they stopped doing in the nineties?

Turn down the radio and talk a bit. Tell them some of the things you're thankful for...some of the things that amaze you about God. Ask them what they think.

At this time of year, ask your kids their favorite part about the story of Jesus birth? What's your favorite part?

Do you eat dinner together? If not, I want to suggest that you start. And use that time talk about a verse of Scripture. Talk about what it means.

If you don't know, get out a study Bible and see what John MacArthur has to say. Talk about how it should impact your life.

Inject your lives with spiritual conversation.

If you've got kids in the home, I hope that one of the things you're planning to do when you leave here is talk to your kids about the things you learned *today*...

To tell them about God's mission for *your* life and for *their* lives.

If they've been involved in one of our Children's or Student ministries this morning, I hope you're planning to ask them what they learned.

Let me provide you with some **Resource Suggestions**:

Did you know that we've got a section in our bulletin explicitly designed to help you carry on faith conversations with your kids about the things they learned in Sunday School.

It's that section inside the cover titled "Faith Kids @ Home."

There are suggestions for questions you can ask them...passages you can read together...songs you can sing...verses you can memorize.

I want to encourage you to incorporate those ideas into your week.

And if you'd like to have those suggestions e-mailed to you, you can go to our website and subscribe to the Faith Kids Connection. The web address is there on your handout.

Faith Kids Connection: blogs.faithlafayette.org/faithkids

If you go there, you can subscribe to the types of posts you want to receive and you'll get them e-mailed to you each week.

You've also got some other resources listed there on your handout.

I'm not going to take the time to discuss them, but they can serve as good spiritual conversation starters...

(Only include the following resources on the handout)

***Big Truths for Little Kids* by Susan Hunt and Richie Hunt**
Simple stories designed to teach kids digest deep truths about God.

***Sticky Situations - 365 Devotions for Kids & Families* by Betsy Schmitt**
Devotions designed to help families think about glorifying God in life's difficult moments.

***Sticky Situations 2 - 365 Devotions for Elementary Kids* by Betsy Schmitt**
More discussion starters designed to help families glorify God.

***Everyday Talk: Talking Freely and Naturally about God with Your Children* by John Younts**

Now, I want to warn you...if you're not in the habit of doing this, you may feel weird at first.

You may feel like you don't know what you're doing...like you're a pig on roller skates.

But don't let that stop you. Acknowledge the weirdness. Embrace the weirdness.

The more you do it, the more natural it will become.

Can I give you another encouragement: there's a sense in which you're doing this right now.

By applying yourself to the study of God's Word this morning, you are placing these truths on your heart.

At least, I hope that's what you're doing. And that's part of this process.

But you need to know that you're never going to be able to lead your kids where you yourself haven't gone.

And you say, "Pastor Trey, what do you mean by that?"

God has given us a mission...He's called us to love Him, but you can't love God if you're separated from Him.

And you say, "Pastor Trey, what do you mean by *that*?"

Scripture teaches that...

Romans 3:23

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

In the book of Isaiah we read that...

Isaiah 59:2

Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

Our sins prevent us from having any kind of relationship with a holy God, and those same sins ultimately lead to our destruction.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death...

Because of our sin, all of us deserve to spend an eternity separated from God.

But remember, we have a God who wants a loving relationship with us. In fact, he went to great lengths to make that possible be with us.

Jesus came to save His people from their sins. He did that through His death, burial, and resurrection.

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

God offers salvation to any who will acknowledge their sin and embrace Christ as their Savior.

And should you choose to do that, God has a marvelous promise for you.

Romans 10:9

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Now, I understand that you may have questions about that. And if you'd like to talk to one of us, call the church office this week, or send us an e-mail.

We'll be happy to sit down with you and show you from the Scripture how you can know with absolute certainty that you're on your way to heaven.

But for those who have already trusted Christ, you need to put yourself in the best possible position to fulfill your mission

If you've got influence over kids...or if you will someday...then you need to put yourself in a position to help them.

Maybe the step you need to take as a result of hearing these truths is to purpose to spend more time with Him.

Maybe you need to sit down with your schedule, and block out specific times that you're going to spend reading His Word, that you're going to spend talking to Him in prayer.

Maybe you need to spend some time evaluating your kids, considering the ways in which they most need to grow, and discussing the truths that will help them to do that.

God has given us a mission—to love him with our entire being, through obedience to His commands and service to others. Let's be faithful to fulfill it.

Let's pray.