

## **Forming the Next Generation of God-Loving Followers of Jesus – Our Own Children!**

*(Raising our children to know, love, follow, serve, and enjoy God)*

### **Text: Deuteronomy 6:1-9**

*“Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it,<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.*

*<sup>4</sup> “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.<sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

*<sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.<sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

### **Introduction: (upon the prayerful dedication of our children)**

This morning we have participated together as a community of faith in something that is both deeply precious and extremely powerful to the parents and the children who stood before us this morning and heard us covenant with them to help ***raise their children to love God with all their heart and follow Jesus for all their days.***

Those of us who are raising children at times, in utter desperation, wonder if such a thing is even possible. Those among us who have raised children can, by the grace of God, attest that it can be done with God’s help, by His Spirit’s gracious provision found in God’s Words, and through the encouragement and partnership of God’s people in His Church.

But where in God's Word do we turn for help? Among the key passages dedicated to help one generation form up the faith of another generation is the text we intend to explore this morning – the ***words from God*** that Moses spoke to a generation of parents who were about to take their children into the land God promised to their forefathers – the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).

Words are powerful things – they have immense power to shape character and influence the direction a person takes in life.

*(Video clip – the power of words)*

If our human words have this kind of power to shape character and influence the direction of our lives – God's words have even more power to shape true character and influence the eternal direction of our children's lives.

The passage we are exploring this morning comes at the end of Moses' life as a new generation of Israelites prepares to enter and possess the land God had promised their ancestors. Forty years earlier, after witnessing God's mighty works on their behalf and after experiencing God's gracious redemption of them from the "iron-furnace" of slavery in Egypt, their parents had commenced on an 11-day journey to this wonderful, bountiful land of promise (flowing with milk and honey).

Sadly, despite all they saw, heard, and experienced, that generation failed to enter the land because they failed to embrace God and refused to believe His words.

After witnessing the devastating loss of one generation, Moses did not want to witness the loss of another. So he assembles the new generation before Him – the sons and daughters of the generation that perished in the wilderness and gives to them words that God has given to him – good words; life-giving words designed to shape and prepare a nation to know, love, worship, serve, and enjoy the One True God in the good and bountiful land He was giving to them.

These nine verses sum up the nature, purpose, and life-shaping power of the entire Torah (the Law of the Lord) designed to be their wisdom and understanding in the sight of the rest of the nations (Dt. 4:1-8) – ***if – they were careful to keep their soul diligently and guard their heart carefully*** so they would remember and not forget the wonderful things God had done for them out of His immense love for them and pleasure in them!

Furthermore, these verses warned the generation standing before Moses preparing to go across and inherit the bountiful and good land (milk and honey) not to repeat the devastating mistake made by their fathers who forfeited their right to go in because of ***unbelief***.

Moses was concerned not just that they dwell in the land but that their children and grandchildren would as well – and for this to happen, God would have to help them teach those generations to know, love, obey, serve, and follow Him! With this end in mind, Moses gives them words from God designed to shape the heart and form the soul of the nation.

That goal is exactly what Moses addresses here with Israel in inspired words designed for a particular nation. While we are not Israel, we can learn important lessons from Moses' instruction to them that will help us raise our own children to know God truly, love Him fully, and follow Him faithfully for all their days and in all their ways.

With that in mind, let's listen in as Moses addresses the nation with five important spiritual exhortations that arise from what is perhaps the most significant and most recognized paragraphs in the entire Torah – “The Shema.”

## I. Realize the Foundational Reality Supporting this Instruction

- The foundational reality behind these words is the stunning truth that the God of Heaven and Earth ***voluntarily initiated a love-based covenant relationship with this nation*** (5:2).
- Based on this covenant relationship, God acted in powerful and amazing ways to deliver His people from the cruel bondage and unbearable affliction they suffered in Egypt (5:6).
- Furthermore, based on this covenant relationship God made stunning promises to bless and prosper this nation (6:3).
- And all of this was done out of the passionate, intense, and undeserved love God had for this unlovable and undesirable group of people who He decided to choose for His special, treasured possession (Dt. 7:6-11).

<sup>6</sup> *“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. <sup>7</sup> It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup> but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. <sup>9</sup> Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, <sup>10</sup> and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. <sup>11</sup> You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.*

- The most stunning reality in these verses is not that we love God for who He is and considering what He has done for us. Rather, it is that God loved us despite who we are and what we have done against Him!
- The apostle John sums it up this way – *“We love Him because He first loved us!”* (1 John 4:19)
- Moses is not giving Israel these instructions in order that they might somehow earn the love and pleasure of God but ***because*** He has loved them and acted for them out of that love.

## II. Recognize the Supreme Importance of this Instruction (1-3)

### A. *The Importance of these Words (6:1)*

*“Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it,*

- Important because of their source – *The Lord your God*
  - ⇒ Not sourced in Moses alone.
  - ⇒ Not human wisdom about how the world works.
  - ⇒ Not just religious stipulations and obligations that were part of being an Israelite similar to the kinds of religious stipulations and obligations common to other religions.
  - ⇒ But the words from the creator and sovereign ruler of Heaven and over all the earth!
- Important because of their content – *The Commandment from God*
  - ⇒ Note the singular “commandment” followed by “statutes and regulations”.
  - ⇒ This is a reference to the entire Law or Torah that is introduced in chapter 4, expressed in chapter 5, and now identified as the central truth that would define and shape Israel’s view of life and the world around them.
- Important because of their accountability – *that you may do them (v.1)*
  - ⇒ Not intended to be religious or theological jargon.
  - ⇒ Not intended to be relegated to the realm of worship and rituals in Israel.
  - ⇒ Intended to be personally embraced (note the plural “you” in verse 1 and the singular “you” in verse 2) and consistently practiced in every part of life.

### B. *The Nature of these Words – wisdom (Dt. 4:5-6)*

*<sup>5</sup>See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>6</sup>Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’*

- Amazing Wisdom in the eyes of the Nations – who is your God and how do we become His people?
- Accurate Worldview for the eyes of God’s People – here is how the world works, why it works this way, and what God has called you to be and do for His glory in this broken world.

### **C. The Purpose for these Words (6:2-3)**

*...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. <sup>3</sup> 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.*

1. To help them “Fear” the Lord (v. 2) – right view of God leading to a true relationship with Him.
2. To help them “Obey” the Lord (v. 2,3) – right behavior before the Lord (you, your children, your grandchildren).
3. To help them Prosper before the Lord (v. 3)
  - That it might go well with you
  - That you might multiply greatly
  - That you might enjoy God’s blessing bountifully
  - That you might dwell in this land for many days

***These words from God were designed to instruct, equip, prepare, and motivate this new generation to:***

- Worship God Authentically (by knowing and loving Him)
- Serve Him Acceptably (by obeying His words)
- Represent Him Accurately (by modeling His wisdom)
- Enjoy Him Abundantly (by receiving, enjoying, and celebrating His blessings)

### III. Receive the Central Truth at the Heart of this Instruction (4-5)

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

- Known as the "Shema" – recited 3x a day by orthodox Jews.
- Core truth to Israel's faith and to what it means to be a Jew.
- 16 words that express who God is, what He is like, and what our response to Him should be.

#### A. *The Central Truth Expressed (v. 4)*

1. The God in view is the sovereign LORD over all that is in heaven and over all that is upon the earth. He rules over the kings of the earth and sustains by His providence all that lives upon the earth.
2. The one true God is our God who chose to initiate a personal relationship with us and has acted in astonishing ways for the good of His people.
3. This Sovereign God is the only God that exists – He alone is the true God, and as such, He alone deserves and merits our exclusive worship and service.

*How should we respond to this central truth about God?*

#### B. *The Central Response Expected (v. 5)*

What we might expect here are words describing the sacrifices and offerings we should bring before him, the obedience we should give him, or the acts of service we might render to him. ***But instead, Moses tells us that before any of these things – God desires that we love him.***

- We must love him personally – "you shall love"
- We must love him exclusively – "the Lord your God"
- We must love him completely – "will all your heart and soul"
- We must love him intensely – "with all your strength"

#### IV. Respond Personally to this Instruction (6-7a)

*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children,*

In response to who God is and what He has done for His people, we are to give God ***unreserved devotion, undivided allegiance, unrestrained affection, and unqualified obedience.***

##### ***A. Personally – Internalize these words and responses (v. 6)***

*These words shall be on your heart*

- They need to move from being written on tablets of stone to being written on our hearts – internalized!
- In other words, they need to shape who we are, what we value, and how we live!
- They need to be our delight and meditation (Ps. 1:2; 119:97).

##### ***B. Parentally – Instruct your children in these words (v. 7a)***

*You shall teach them diligently to your children*

- Diligently has the idea of ***carefully*** and ***repeatedly*** engraving or carving something permanently in stone.
- What you are to engrave into the heart of your children is the amazing truth about the God who loves them, redeems them, and desires to abundantly bless them!
- This is more than just teaching them the does and don'ts of the Christian religion.
- It is more than just teaching them the doctrinal content of the Christian faith.
- It is introducing them and repeatedly reminding them of who God is and what He is truly like – so that they will know Him truly, love Him fully, worship Him exclusively, and follow Him gladly for all of their days and in all of their ways!
- Rehearsing for them the marvelous works God has done for us as parents!
- And for this to be true of them, it must be true of us! (Lk 6:40)



## V. **Raise others to Fully Embrace this Instruction (7b-9)**

*,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. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Given the immensity of the task and the intensity of what is at stake should we fail, how on earth are we to teach these words to our children effectively so they embrace them personally and live them consistently?

### **A. Teach these words intentionally (6:6, 7)**

- This task is too important to neglect; the stakes too high to delegate to others – you must personally insure that your children know God in ways that cause them to love Him.
- The idea here is of someone carefully carving vital truth into tablets of stone – you are to make the effort to do this very kind of teaching in the hearts of your children.

### **B. Talk of these words constantly (6:7)**

- Where – ***in all places and spaces*** – when you sit in your house or when you walk in the way (and everywhere in-between). In other words, ***in every realm of life.***
- When – at all times and seasons – from the time you get up until the time you lie down at night (all throughout the day). In other words, ***in all the circumstances of life.***

### **C. Model these words consistently (6:8-9)**

- Privately in your own life – let your love for God and obedience to His Word shape all you do (bind them on your arm) and what you value (bind them on your forehead and between your eyes).
- Publicly in your home and community – let your love for God shape your life at home (doorposts of your house) and your conduct in your community (gates of the city).

## **Conclusion: (5 key objectives)**

If we seriously desire to raise another generation – our own – to love and serve God, then the most important thing for us to do is to love and serve God ourselves – and to do it consistently and transparently before our families!

It will require that we understand and agree with the objective God has for them that is unfolded in this passage. In other words, we must strive to raise our children:

- a. To truly know God and not just know about Him
- b. To seek to serve God rather than to be served by Him
- c. To pursue significance in God's kingdom rather than success in the kingdoms of this world
- d. To pursue God's approval more than the approval of men
- e. To spend their lives and use their resources to advance His kingdom instead of saving their lives and spending their resources on themselves or for their own purposes.

It will require that we live and model what we hope to instill in them. If we are honest, often we will find ourselves needing to correct our own course, confess our own sins, and rekindle our own devotion to the Lord.

It will require that we commit our children to His wise words and entrust them to His loving care – depending on Him to do the work in their hearts that He has done and continues to do on our own.

Finally, it will require that we seek God's face and intercede for them as Moses interceded for the generation standing before him in this portion of Deuteronomy.