



Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

What does the Bible say about...

Parenting

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 2 Timothy 1:1-7

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Main Point

Parents are the primary disciple makers in their children's lives.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is your favorite memory of a moment with your mother or father?

**What would you say is the most important thing your mother or father ever taught you?
How has it impacted your life?**

Parents have two primary responsibilities: to model who Christ is and to mentor their children in regard to who Christ is. Does that make the task of parenting seem more or less daunting to you?

Parents are integral to the Christian home and the raising up of the next generation of Christians. In many cases it's through the work of parents that God brings children to salvation. The calling on parents to be disciple makers is clear in Scripture. The Shema of Deuteronomy 6 was to be taught by parents in the home. God expected one generation of His people to teach the next. The New Testament gives us the example of Timothy's faith, which he learned from his mother and grandmother. Paul reminded Timothy of that upbringing in his second letter to Timothy. Let's look at both.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9.

Why do you think God told His people not just to love Him, but to love Him with all their hearts, souls, and strength? What was He trying to emphasize?

Why is loving God with your whole self important if you want to parent your kids in a godly way?

We can't teach what we don't know ourselves. And we can't help our kids love God with everything they are unless we know what that means ourselves. So, God told His people to love Him, and then as they love Him, to teach the next generation to do the same.

Why is it important for parents to see their responsibility for their kids and at the same time help kids see they are responsible for their own choices? How can that happen?

Read Proverbs 22:6. Does this verse mean that children in godly homes never leave the faith or make bad choices? If not, what does it mean?

Each of us, including our children, are ultimately responsible for our own actions. Parents are not responsible for the choices their children make; however they are responsible for modeling and teaching them what it means to live Christian lives. Proverbs 22:6 isn't a promise that children from Christian homes will never make bad choices; it describes, however, the way the family is meant to work. By following God's Word, we can raise children who avoid evil and serve God faithfully.

Look back at Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What was the truth parents were to teach their children? How were they supposed to teach these truths?

What would this kind of teaching look like today?

What do you think it means to "impress" God's commandments on your children (v. 7)?

In verses 7-9, there are some teaching methods that might sound strange to us. We don't usually bind God's Word on our hands or put it as a symbol on our foreheads. The bigger principle here is one of consistency. That's how we impress God's commands on our children—it's through consistently and regularly talking about them and living them out together as a family.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7.

What do verses 2-4 tell us about Paul and Timothy's relationship?

Who did Timothy first learn about Christ from? Who set an example for him in how to follow Christ when he was young (v. 5)?

What does that tell us about the potential influence of parents on the lives of their children?

What do you think it means to “fan into flame the gift of God”? What does that mean with reference to our relationships with others, especially the children in our lives?

In this letter, Paul wanted to continue discipling Timothy, a ministry Lois and Eunice had started long before Paul had visited their city. Paul began to build on their work of exhorting Timothy. Paul was reminding Timothy that it was time to add fuel and fan the coals of his ministry into an open flame by recalling the passion he had felt at his ordination into ministry and the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life. God’s desire for His people is to demonstrate a strong, enduring lifestyle of faith, even if that genuine faith resembles glowing coals hidden beneath the ashes of long-past victories. Paul’s challenge should encourage us to take seriously the influence we have over the people in our lives and to look for ways to actively point them to Christ.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How are you reflecting God’s image and His characteristics daily in your home? How do these texts influence the way you approach leading your family?

How are you helping your children, family, and friends to discover more of who Christ is and His plans for their lives? What in your life might be preventing you from doing this more?

What are some things we can do to remind ourselves to take an active role in the faith journeys of our family members and friends?

How might focusing on the gospel help you overcome your greatest fears about parenting or mentoring others?

Pray

Thank God for our mothers and fathers and the legacy left behind for us. Pray that we would faithfully model for our children what it looks like to follow Christ passionately. For those who aren't parents, pray that we would be faithful models and mentors to the people closest to us.

Commentary

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

6:4. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is arguably the best-known passage of Scripture in ancient and modern Judaism. Deuteronomy 6:4 begins with the Hebrew verb rendered listen (shema), and these verses are commonly referred to as the Shema. These verses make two important declarations about God and His people's obligation to Him. The first declaration is a statement about the uniqueness of Israel's God. The assertion is that the Lord ... is one. The word rendered the Lord is, of course, God's personal name, Yahweh. Declaring that Yahweh is one denotes there is no other existing Deity. People might worship other so-called gods, but those gods are not real. They are worthless fabrications of human minds (see Isa. 44:10-11).

6:5. The second declaration is that God's people are commanded to love the Lord. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment in the law, He responded by quoting this verse (see Mark 12:30). The first thing to analyze in this command is the verb rendered love.

The measure of our love for God is to be greater than all other affections. We are to love Him wholeheartedly (“all your heart”). The biblical conception and use of the term heart differs at points from modern usage. The term does not refer primarily to the fleshly organ but rather to the core of our inner, spiritual being. Heart refers to the power of the mind to think and remember (see Deut. 4:9). Heart also refers to our volition in making decisions (see Ex. 7:13). Thus to love God with all our heart means to choose Him above all other desires and to make Him our highest priority life. Likewise, we’re to love God with all our soul. The Hebrew term rendered soul can refer to physical appetites (see Job 33:20), emotions (see Job 30:25), and the spiritual nature (see Ps. 19:7). A supreme love for God results in submitting every human appetite and desire to His will. Finally, we are to love God with all our strength. This term refers to every talent and resource we possess. We are to give our best efforts in serving and worshiping the Lord.

6:6-7. Families are instructed to bequeath the ways of God to the next generations. However, parents and grandparents cannot teach what they themselves do not know and practice. A passionate devotion to the Lord must first be in the parents’ and grandparents’ hearts. Only then are they equipped to help instill a genuine love for God in younger lives. Primary responsibility for teaching children spiritual truth cannot be delegated by parents to others. Parents have a unique relationship with their children and a responsibility to teach them about God in daily life (when you sit in your house ... walk along the road,...lie down and...get up). Church attendance is vitally important for children’s overall spiritual development, but participation in church activities can never substitute for the daily spiritual instruction children need from godly parents.

6:8-9. The need for individuals and families to focus daily on the ways of God is emphasized with the commands to bind God’s commands on one’s hand and forehead. In addition they were to be written on the door posts of their houses and gates. In New Testament-era Judaism, these commands were observed literally by attaching small boxes containing various Scriptures to the hand and forehead.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9 - THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY

6:4-5 The Decalogue (or Ten Commandments) of Deut 5:6-21 (= Exod 20:2-17) embodies the great principles of covenant relationship that outline the nature and character of God and spell out Israel’s responsibilities to him. It is thus an encapsulation or distillation of the entire corpus of covenant text. The passage at hand is a further refinement of that great relational truth, an

adumbration of an adumbration, as it were. It is the expression of the essence of all of God's person and purposes in sixteen words of Hebrew text. Known to Jewish tradition as the Shema (after the first word of v. 4, the imperative of the verb *šma*, "to hear"), this statement, like the Decalogue, is prefaced by its description as "commands, decrees, and laws" (or the like) and by injunctions to obey them (6:1–3; cf. 4:44–5:5).

The sentence itself commences with the imperative of *šma* in the second person singular form. "To hear," in Hebrew lexicography, is tantamount to "to obey," especially in covenant contexts such as this. That is, to hear God without putting into effect the command is not to hear him at all. The singular form of the verb emphasizes the corporate or collective nature of the addressee, that is, Israel. The covenant was made with the nation as a whole and so the nation must as a unified community give heed to the command of the Lord.

The plurality of the people is also noted here, however, in that it is "Yahweh our God" who is the subject of the following clause. Despite a variety of ways of viewing that clause ("Yahweh our God is one Yahweh," "Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one," and the like), the structure of the line, almost poetic, favors the rendering "Yahweh (is) our God, Yahweh is one." That is, the Divine Name should be construed as a nominative in each case and the terms "our God" and "one" as parallel predicate nominatives. However, as the following discussion points out, there is sufficient ambiguity as to allow the idea of God's oneness as well as his uniqueness.

Postbiblical rabbinic exegesis understood the role of the Shema to be the heart of all the law. When Jesus was asked about the greatest of the commandments, he cited this (and its companion in Lev 19:18) as the fundamental tenet of Jewish faith, an opinion with which his hearers obviously concurred (Matt 22:34–39; Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:25–28). So much so did the centrality of this confession find root in the Jewish consciousness that to this very day the observant Jew will recite the Shema at least twice daily.⁷⁶

It is possible to understand v. 4 in several ways, but the two most common renderings of the last clause are: (1) "The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (so NIV) or (2) "The LORD our God is one LORD." The former stresses the uniqueness or exclusivity of Yahweh as Israel's God and so may be paraphrased, "Yahweh our God is the one and only Yahweh" or the like. This takes the noun *ed* ("one") in the sense of "unique" or "solitary," a meaning that is certainly well attested. The latter translation focuses on the unity or wholeness of the Lord. This is not in opposition to the later Christian doctrine of the Trinity but rather functions here as a witness to the self-consistency of the Lord, who is not ambivalent and who has a single purpose or objective for creation and history.⁷⁸ The ideas clearly overlap to provide an unmistakable basis for monotheistic faith. The Lord is indeed a unity, but beyond that he is the only God. For this reason the exhortation of v. 5 has practical significance.

The confession of the Lord's unique oneness leads to the demand that Israel recognize him as such by obedience to all that that implies. In language appropriate to covenant, that obedience is construed as love; that is, to obey is to love God with every aspect and element of one's being. This equation has already been made clear in the Decalogue itself, where the Lord said, in reference to the second commandment, that he displays covenant faithfulness (esed) to the thousands who love him and keep his commandments (Deut 5:10). In covenant terms, then, love is not so much emotive or sensual in its connotation (though it is not excluded in those respects), but it is of the nature of obligation, of legal demand. Thus because of who and what he is in regard to his people whom he elected and redeemed, the Lord rightly demands of them unqualified obedience.

The depth and breadth of that expectation is elaborated upon by the fact that it encompasses the heart, soul, and strength of God's people, here viewed collectively as a covenant partner. The heart (lb) is, in Old Testament anthropology, the seat of the intellect, equivalent to the mind or rational part of humankind. The "soul" (better, "being" or "essential person" in line with commonly accepted understanding of Heb. *nepeš*) refers to the invisible part of the individual, the person qua person including the will and sensibilities. The strength (md) is, of course, the physical side with all its functions and capacities. The word occurs only here and in 2 Kgs 23:25 as a noun with nonadverbial nuance, and even here the notion is basically that of "muchness." That is, Israel must love God with all its essence and expression.

Jesus said that this was "the first and greatest commandment" (Matt 22:38), an observation that is profoundly correct in at least two respects. First it qualifies as such inasmuch as it constitutes the essence of the Deuteronomic covenant principle and requirement. As stated before, the Shema is to the Decalogue what the Decalogue is to the full corpus of covenant stipulations. But it also is first and greatest because it is a commentary on the very first of the Ten Commandments—"You shall have no other gods before me" (Deut 5:7). This affirmation of the uniqueness and exclusiveness of Yahweh as Israel's Sovereign and Savior finds full endorsement and explication in the Shema, for to recognize Yahweh's unity and solitariness and to respond to that confession with total obedience is the strongest possible way of demonstrating adherence to the first commandment.

Jesus' use of the Shema is attested in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matt 22:37–38; Mark 12:29–30; Luke 10:27). Matthew and Mark placed it immediately after the denial by the Sadducees of a resurrection whereas Luke recorded it as a response to the lawyer's question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" In fact, in Luke's account it is the lawyer who quotes the second half of the Shema (Deut 6:5) in answer to Jesus' follow-up question to him, "What is written in the law?"

What seems clear here is that the Shema was cited on two different occasions, once by Jesus in his reply to the Pharisee lawyer concerning the greatest commandment and once by the seeker who desired to know the way of life. Doubtless these instances are not exhaustive of all the citations of the Shema in Jesus' public ministry; indeed, they may reflect a widespread recognition of its centrality in Jewish religious thought. It is striking, to say the least, that the "great commandment" (so Matthew) or the "first of all" (so Mark) is the very one which, if followed, leads to life (so Luke 10:28). All this must be understood against the background of the Shema in Deuteronomy, where, as noted already, it serves as the essence of the Decalogue and, indeed, of all the law. It is first and most important precisely because it encapsulates all of God's saving intentions and provisions. To love God as it commands is to place oneself within the orbit of his saving grace because the Shema, the heart and core of the Old Testament law, was designed, as Paul said, to be "put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24).

Exhortation to Teach Them (6:6-9)

As noted already (4:9-10; 6:2), an important demand of the covenant relationship was that it be perpetuated beyond the immediate generation of those with whom the Lord made it, for its promises and provisions were for generations yet unborn (4:25, 40; 5:9-10, 29). In practical terms this necessitated a regular routine of instruction. Father must educate son and son the grandson so that the fact and features of the covenant might never be forgotten.

6:6 The whole is here described as "these commandments" (lit., "these words"), a term that encompasses the full corpus of the covenant text as communicated by Moses but which is encapsulated especially in the Shema of vv. 4-5. This is evident in the instruction to "tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads" (v. 8) as well as to "write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (v. 9). In the larger sense they are to be committed to memory as the idiom "upon your hearts" (v. 6) makes clear. In the psychology of the Old Testament the heart is not the center of emotional life and response but the seat of the intellect or rational side of humankind. To "be upon the heart" is to be in one's constant, conscious reflection.

6:7 So much so is this the case that the covenant recipient must impress the words of covenant faith into the thinking of his children by inscribing them there with indelible sharpness and precision (thus the piel of *šnan*). The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite. The sheer labor of such a task is daunting indeed, but once done the message is there to stay. Thus it is that the generations of Israelites to come must receive and transmit the words of the Lord's everlasting covenant revelation.

In less figurative terms and yet with clear hyperbole, Moses said that the way this message is made indelible is by constant repetition. Thus whether while sitting at home or walking in the pathway, whether lying down to sleep or rising for the tasks of a new day, teacher and pupil must be preoccupied with covenant concerns and their faithful transmission (v. 7). The pairing of these sets of contrasting places and postures forms a double merism (using opposing terms to express an all-encompassing concept). Sitting suggests inactivity; and walking, of course, activity. Together they encompass all of human effort. Likewise, to retire at night and rise up in the morning speaks of the totality of time. So important is covenant truth that it must be at the very center of all one's labor and life.

In what was apparently intended to be another figurative way of expressing the centrality of the covenant to everyday life, Moses instructed the people to tie the words of covenant to their hands and foreheads (v. 8). In the former instance—the binding to the hands (or forearms, as *yad* clearly means here)—the purpose is that the words might be “for a sign” (*lôt*). That is, they would identify their bearer as a member of the covenant community. When attached to the forehead (thus NIV as opposed to the literal “between the eyes”), the words function as bands wrapped around the head at the level of the forehead, the purpose of which, as the Hebrew parallelism makes clear, was also to serve as symbols of covenant affiliation. In postbiblical Judaism and to the present day a miniature box containing verses of the Torah (Exod 13:1–10; 13:11–16; Deut 6:4–9; and Deut 11:13–21) were placed inside the four chambers of the box, the whole being known as the *tpillîn* (“prayers”) or phylactery (cf. Matt 23:5). A similar box with only one chamber but containing the same texts was worn on the forearm as a “hand phylactery.”

That this binding on arm and forehead was originally intended to be figurative (more precisely, metaphorical) is quite clear from the context of the instruction, where there can be no doubt about the nonliteral meaning (“upon the heart,” v. 6; “at home,” “along the road,” v. 7). Moreover, the practical impossibility of wearing such objects in everyday life suggests the figurative nature of the injunction as, indeed, does the fact that they are worn only on special worship occasions in modern Judaism. Such restriction to special times is not to be found in any of the four passages where the *tpillîn* are discussed (see above).

The covenant words also were to be written on the doorframes of Israelite houses and on the gateposts of their villages (v. 9). Once more this should be understood metaphorically, but in postbiblical practice observant Jews placed a *mzûzh* (the same word as that for “doorpost”), a small metal receptacle containing Deut 6:4–9 and Deut 11:13–21 in twenty-two lines, at the right of the doorway in obedience to Moses' instructions here. The form of the commandment is in any case most significant. After ordering that the covenant commandments be worn on the person of the faithful Israelite, Moses expanded the sphere of covenant claim to the house

and then to the village. In this manner the person and his entire family and community become identified as the people of the Lord.

Eugene H. Merrill, Deuteronomy, vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 162–168.

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7

1:1-2. Paul always saw himself first as a servant or an apostle of Christ Jesus. Apostle means literally “sent one.” The early church recognized as apostles those leaders with a special call who had seen the resurrected Christ. Paul was always eager to establish his apostleship, not because he desired adoration or special privilege, but because he wanted others to recognize that his authority came not from self-appointment, nor from man’s selection but by God’s personal choice: by the will of God. It is possible that, with death so imminent, Paul became more cognizant of the eternal life into which he would enter. Certainly he understood this promise of life that is in Christ Jesus as experiential to some degree in this present world. But with his approaching execution, he must also have felt the anticipation of seeing Jesus and entering fully into the promise. He must have been aware of standing on the threshold to a blissful existence. With no expectation that he would be released from prison again, he wrote to Timothy, his dear son. This attests to more than spiritual kinship; it announces an intimate and emotional bond. Their love for each other increased over time as they stood together in difficulty and worked in ministry. Paul thought about this young man, now separated from him by distance and prison, and considered him with the affection of a father toward a son. With these emotions, Paul offered to Timothy grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1:3. Paul began with thanksgiving. It is important, however, to sift through all the clauses of the sentence in order to arrive at the object of his thankfulness. Paul, at the end of life’s journey, offered thanks for this young man of faith. In the middle of his thanksgiving, Paul inserted a personal tribute to his heritage of faith. He probably did this to establish a parallel between himself and Timothy. Later he directed Timothy to consider his own upbringing. Paul thanked God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience. No one could convict Paul of pandering to public opinion, faddish philosophies, or personal ambition. He served God and no other. The God he served was the same one to whom his ancestors were committed. He drew the line of his faith through previous generations. Paul had not denied his

Hebrew heritage by following Jesus Christ; he had fulfilled it (Acts 13:16–33). This he did with a clear conscience, one that was healthy and not diseased by the misinterpretation of Scripture or the hardening of his heart through sin.

1:5. Paul returned to the subject of spiritual heritage as he thought about Timothy: I have been reminded of your sincere faith. He had watched Timothy and worked beside him for years. In Timothy, Paul recognized a genuine faith, one adhering to the teachings of Christ and the apostles, which in turn produced righteous behavior. Proper belief and proper actions are components of sincere faith. Paul realized that genuine faith had been modeled for Timothy through his family. It was evident in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice. Though true faith cannot be inherited, it can be demonstrated in convincing ways within the context of a family. Even so, each person must entrust himself personally to Jesus Christ. True faith is individually claimed. Timothy's father was Greek. His mother and grandmother, however, were Jewish (Acts 16:1). Apparently they had trained Timothy in reading and memorizing Old Testament texts because Paul later remarked how Timothy had from childhood known the holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15). This had proved a good foundation as he developed into faith in Christ. The genuine faith Paul had noted in Timothy's mother and grandmother, he was convinced now lived in Timothy.

1:6. Having established Timothy's heritage of belief in God and confirmed his conviction that Timothy shared in this genuine faith, Paul issued a command. The reason Paul could remind Timothy of God's gift was because Timothy was an authentic believer. The gift of God, which is in you was probably the Holy Spirit. Every genuine believer receives this gift from God. This is why Paul told Timothy that he was persuaded of his sincere faith. Timothy had this powerful gift within him, enabling him to perform all that God required. Even so, Timothy must fan into flame the Spirit's power. This is a present-tense verb. It might better be translated "keep fanning." It was not that the Spirit's flame was weak or needed to be alive by human effort but that the Spirit only works in cooperation with those who desire his enablement. We keep fanning the flame by keeping "in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25), by disciplining ourselves in godliness to produce the fruit which is his nature (Gal. 5:22).

1:7. Having confirmed that Timothy possessed this great gift of God's grace, his own Spirit, Paul pointed Timothy toward the boldness that should belong to every believer: For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. Timothy, many interpreters surmise, was a man of quiet disposition—a retiring, timid individual who had been thrust into a leadership role for which he had no predilection. The battle against the false teachers was strenuous, leaving Timothy weary, perhaps even questioning what he was doing. It is possible that he was overwhelmed by these circumstances. But Paul countered our natural tendencies and excuses by directing us to consider this great gift which we all

possess—the Spirit of God. Our natural abilities can only supplement what God calls us to do. The important consideration in all of life’s challenges and duties is to remember that God’s Spirit resides within us. He is the giver of power, love, and self-discipline. Power is simply enablement to do what God requires. We are never asked to do anything beyond what God gives strength and ability to accomplish. Love is expressed first to God, then to others. It is the distinguishing quality of Christians, this unnatural love, and it comes only as we allow the life of God’s Spirit to live through us. Self-discipline denotes careful, sensible thinking. It is the ability to think clearly with the wisdom and understanding that God imparts. Fear is a driving force in society today. It is the main subject of the evening news, the underlying premise of advertising and marketing. Fear often spawns confused thinking, irrationalities, and misunderstandings. Thoughts and speculations swirl in our mind when fear enters. This is why Christ calls us to healthy, orderly thought processes. Perhaps we can look at life and realize our need for God’s power. We need God’s strength in our daily living, to endure and make wise choices, to live in patience, producing goodness (Col. 1:9-14).