

BIB103 OT1: Creation and Covenants

Unit 6b Practical Actions for All Generations

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There's a real anchor passage in Deuteronomy that I want to take some time to talk about because it's one of the passages that's probably impacted me personally in a huge way as it comes to being a parent. But I also feel it's one that we can all apply to our lives. Now, let me give you a little bit of the picture and the background of it so you'd understand. The Israelites had just been wandering. They now had a generation that had not seen the hand of God the way that the generation prior to them had, but they had heard the stories. They were entering a new land and they needed to realize the foundational aspects of which they wanted to live and establish their society on. And so Moses here, starting in verse 1, and I'm going to read through verse 12, has some important points for us to consider.

He says this in Deuteronomy 6:1. "Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances which Jehovah your God commanded to teach you that you might do them in the land whither you go over to possess it. That thou mightest fear Jehovah thy God to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's sons, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged." So Moses is saying to them, "These are the commandments, the principles that you need to make sure are the central part of the lives that you live in order to stay focused on God in this new land." It's almost as if he's saying "Hey, guys, I really, really need your attention, especially you dads." But also the moms were a part of this. Fathers are given a specific biblical responsibility of passing a spiritual heritage onto the next generation.

I come from a home that's a broken home. I don't have a mom and dad that brought me up, so to speak, in the principles that are going to be stated here. And I have to start a new generation with my children. I have to have a new legacy, not blaming what took place, knowing that God had a purpose for my legacy, but embracing his plan. These Israelite fathers, at this point, that had been wandering in the wilderness were being told "Guys, are you willing to embrace what God has told me to tell you are the bedrock principles for you to live your lives on?" I find today that so many men that are out in our world, they want to be good dads but their concept of good fatherhood is "I go to all their games. I coach their team." While those are worthy accomplishments in the busy schedules in which we have running around in our day to day lives, they're not the centerpiece of the things that we need to and are called to teach our children.

You see here, this says the commands and the statutes of the Lord. What are some of those? We as fathers are commanded to teach our children how to love their wives by the way we love their mothers. We're commanded as fathers to teach our children how to love God the way they see us love God. You think about this, dads. The view that you have of God is very much fashioned in the relationship and the

interaction that you had with your earthly father. You may have a negative view of God because you felt your dad was dictatorial, for instance. You might have a view of a loving God because your dad was a loving and gracious man. The characteristics and the attributes that you saw, you imitated. Think of it when your children are young. Perhaps you have young children. Remember maybe mowing lawns or washing dishes or whatever tasks that you do day by day, preparing meals, working in the fields, working on a car, whatever they might be. How eager our young children are to come and to mimic us. They want to have that wrench. They want to be in that yard digging with us. They want to be in those bubbles washing those dishes. Why? Because we are God to them in many respects.

Wow. That's a powerful concept. And God knew that and knew how vital it was that for this next generation to embrace who he was, that these dads need to understand the roles and responsibilities that were given to them. And I love the way that he says it. Not just their sons, but your son's sons. Hey, grandpas out there, you have a responsibility to continue to give a legacy of God-focusedness by the way you live. Finish strong. Don't worry about the failures you've made. Take responsibility for them. Acknowledge the fault in that, but move forward and let God continue to mold you to be the man of God that he wants you to be.

He says, as we continue on in the passage, in verse 3, "Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it, that it may well be with you and that you may increase mightily, as Jehovah the God of your fathers have promised to you, in a land filled with milk and honey." What I love about God is he doesn't tell us to do it without showing us how to do it. And we see that it starts in verse 4. "Hear, O Israel. Jehovah our God is one Jehovah. And thou shall love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Our first responsibility is to teach our kids, with all of our being, to love our God. Are we loving God with all of our being, with all of our might, with all of our soul, with all of our heart? And then he says in verse 6. "And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart."

As a dad, when I'm not passionate about something, it's hard for me to teach it to my children. I love football, so going out and throwing the football with my kids was never a struggle, to tell them about the moves and the plays. But for me to play baseball with them, sorry, baseball fans, not one of the sports that at least I'm good at. So when you consider that, I wasn't the best person to teach them. I could toss the ball to them and I could show them how to bat it, but there was no passion involved in it. Men, are we passionate about God? He says they need to be upon your heart. I want God to be number one and the main priority on my heart so that I can be the example that God wants me to do because it's genuine and it's truly a passion that I carry in my life.

Verse 7, he continues to show them what he wants them to do. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto your children.” Teach them diligently. We need to be taking the time to understand it’s a diligent teaching. There’s the argument of parenting. Is it quality time or is it quantity time? I answer every dad and mom that come to me by saying this: “Yes.” There are times in the seasons of our life we have greater quantities. The occasions. Oftentimes, holidays, depending on what we do, perhaps even times of illness give you quantity time with your child. And you need to etch out quantity times, Saturdays and evenings, and make sure it’s a priority. But also quality. Now, the challenge with quality teaching with our children is that they control the window. We can share things with them, but if they don’t have a window of openness for us to teach into their lives, it doesn’t penetrate the way it does in their lives when they have that ‘open window,’ that open heart to say “Speak into me.”

In my family, though, sometimes it took place late at night with my oldest son as he would stumble downstairs, his mind worrying during the day of things, and say to me some of the most profound questions that I had heard. Unfortunately, nighttime wasn’t my best and I had to ask God for strength to direct him. I have other children that it took place when we were driving in a car or perhaps just throwing that football, sometimes even cooking a meal together. We would find that openness as they would say, “Dad, I got a question for you.” So that I needed to understand that whether I felt like it or not, whether I was tired or not, that was an opportunity to teach them diligently. Again, I have to know the context and the material in order to teach it diligently. And that’s what we’re striving to see happen in our children’s lives. And it is lifelong, parents. It isn’t for just the time they live under your roof, but you have an influence on them until the day that you die.

He says teach them diligently. And then again, he even gets more specific and says, “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.” I love that. It’s about teaching our kids in every facet of life. When you walk on a lane, when you’re sitting down, when you’re lying down, it’s again a 24/7 type of a situation where we’re looking for opportunities to say “Let me tell you about the Lord God.” He even gets a little bit more specific, and this is going to challenge, I think, in the culture in which we live. But it was a little bit more easy, and I’ll explain that in a minute, in the culture in which they live. “And thou shall bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thy eyes. And thou shall write them upon the doorposts of your house, and upon the gates.”

Now, I love that. What he wanted them to do is constantly see the promises and principles of God in the things that for them were daily living. On the doorposts of their home, frequently Scripture would be

written there, or even attached to there in small notes that they could see it, on the clothes that they wore. All around them visibly, they could see these principles and promise of God. When I first read this passage, it really struck with me the importance of having Scripture in our home, whether it's my younger children writing, coloring in Scripture verses that we put on the refrigerator, or the nice artsy ones that you place on the wall that can be seen and relevant. And in our home, we even move them around because you know what happens, we oftentimes stop seeing things because of familiarity. At our church, we do the same thing. We put those Scripture verses places to remind people about the promises and principles of God. Parents, be intentional in that way of keeping the principles and promises of God in front of your children.

And then he says in verse 10, "And it shall be, when Jehovah thy God shall bring thee into the land which he swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you great and goodly cities, which you didn't build. And houses full of good things, which you didn't fill, and cisterns hewn out, which you didn't hew, vineyards and olive trees, which you didn't plant; and thou shall eat and be full. Then beware lest thou forget Jehovah, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." God knew how forgetful we were. As Christians, in our churches, we're challenged in the New Testament to practice communion. Why? To remember the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. We would think of all things we would never ever become jaded or forgetful to would be the sacrifice of Christ's death, that we might have life. And yet God knew that in our day to day life, we would forget the bedrock of even what calls us to worship on a Sunday morning because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. Parents, moms, dads, please see this passage. Spend time chewing on it. Look for ways that you can be intentional on teaching your children to love God with their whole heart and to never forget him by the way that you live your life and by the way that you keep him in front of them. A powerful anchor passage here that we see nestled in Deuteronomy, these verses in Chapter 6 that remind us as parents of the immense responsibility and pleasure that we have of molding this generation to embrace the God that we love and that we choose to serve. We're going to wrap this up and go back to our study of the big section chapters in Deuteronomy. But I hope this makes a powerful impact on your life today.