

Core Values: Family-Focused

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Trying My Best

I took a couple of years of Latin in high school. By the end of my second year I began to sense that the train had left the station and I wasn't on it.

Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres is about all I remember from Latin class.

It was indeed a rude awakening when our son, John, came home as a 7th grader carrying a Latin book. We spent many a night conjugating verbs and translating sentences. As unprepared as I was I tried my dead level best to be the very best Latin teacher I could be.

More to point, I tried to be the very best teacher I could be in regard to all the other more important things I really did need to teach.

My Most Important Sermons

You've heard it said, "*You are the only sermon some people will ever see.*" That's certainly the case at home.

I have preached a lot of sermons down through the years, but none have been more important than the "*sermons*" I've preached at home.

They've been a lot different. They are not nearly as formal. There is no pulpit and there certainly aren't any pews.

They are preached as much by action as they are by word. I pray they have borne good fruit.

When it comes to home you are the most important sermon your kids will ever see. Your influence helps to form their lives—for the good, the not so good, and everywhere in between.

A Divine Responsibility

This stuff of teaching our children well has been God's way since the earliest days of the faith.

Moses in delivering the law of the Lord in Deuteronomy 6 made it very clear that God's way was to be shared from one generation to generation, "*so that you, your children, and your children after them might fear the Lord.*"

At the top of the list was the greatest command of all, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength.*"

Everyone was to “*be careful to obey the law so that it might go well*” for them. God’s ways help to order life and bring both fulfillment and joy.

God’s ways were to be passed on, again, from generation to generation. The responsibility to pass on the faith was not some casual exercise. It was a matter of first order and was to be lived out consistently and with intention.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

Teaching Well and at All Times

Let’s look a bit more deeply into what Moses shared when it came to teaching children the truth about God.

First and foremost, he says to put the law “*upon your heart.*”

It’s hard to share something you know nothing about. I’m not talking about head knowledge here. I’m talking about heart knowledge—the sort of heart knowledge that is borne out of a vibrant faith and a personal experience with God.

Nothing takes the place of a strong relationship with God. Our kids are able to see when that relationship is intact and, conversely, when it’s not.

When it comes to teaching children the truth about God, we are to do so “*sitting at home,*” “*walking along the road,*” “*lying down*” or “*getting up.*”

“*Sitting at home*” is a good word for those of us who are always on the run. We need to make time to “*sit*” with those we love the most. We need to listen to them as much as we speak.

“*Walking along the road*” is a good word as well. There is always a lesson to be learned along life’s way. Our kids need someone to walk alongside them, teaching them as they go.

That doesn’t mean we have to be with them every second of everyday, but it does mean that we can be depended upon to be there.

For our kids and grandkids to live with the confidence that someone is there, can make all the difference in the world.

Even our “*lying down*” and our “*getting up*” is not exempt.

Teaching our children well is a 24/7 sort of thing.

I can remember that some of the most important times Cheryl and I had with our boys was at bedtime. It was always a time of prayer.

It was a time to express our love for each other. It was a special time to reflect upon the fact that God was with us.

We need to teach well and do so all the time.

Billy Graham wrote about the family, *“The family should be a closely knit group. The home should be a self-contained shelter of security; a kind of school where life’s basic lessons are taught; and a kind of church where God is honored.”*

Let’s face it, we are homeschooling our kids whether they attend school outside our homes or not.

A Battle for Our Kids

In a very real way, we are in a battle for our kids.

If we don’t teach our kids then somebody else will. Parental influence is that critical. If we don’t make a difference, rest assured, someone else will. In fact, they probably already are.

We are in a battle for the hearts, minds, and spirits of our kids.

We live in a culture where the pressures are enormous. Much of what bombards the lives of our young people is contrary to what we preach and teach.

The internet has far too much sway and social media even more.

A Godly example though has the potential to sway things more than any of these.

In a culture starved for heroes, we’d do well to strive to become those heroes for our children.

Giving In, Giving Up, Giving Over

When it comes to teaching our children, some are all too quick to give in, give up, or give over.

Some parents are quick to give in, particularly when things get tough. Nobody said it would be easy.

Some are quick to give up when their children dig in their heels and push against their leadership.

Others are quick to give their children over to the influence of others.

We need to stay at it, refusing to give in, give up or give over.

May Church and Home Combine

When it comes to the relationship between church and home, we are in partnership together.

As the song goes, *“O Lord may church and home combine to teach thy perfect way, with gentleness and love like thine, that none shall ever stray.”*

In a word the relationship between church and home is complementary. Quite frankly, our children suffer if one side or the other fails to be in place

This strikes at one of our stated Core Values.

We have said about ourselves that *“We desire to come alongside families both at home and at church in supporting, nurturing, and encouraging growth in Christ.”*

This church has always come alongside families in helping them to rear their children in the faith.

It’s no coincidence that we put so much time and resource into our preschool and afterschool ministries, into Upward Basketball and Cheerleading, into our Vacation Bible School and summer camps, and all of this notwithstanding what we do on a weekly basis in and through our Children’s and Youth Ministries.

Teaching children well is a high calling both for parents and the church. We’d all do well to recognize that and do everything in our power to live that out—here and at home.

For me, my parents had a profound effect upon my spiritual life, but so did many others who were a part of my home church.

That sort of complementary relationship had everything to do with forming me as an individual and certainly with my formation as a Christian.

Parents don’t leave spiritual matters solely to the church.

And church, let’s do all we can to encourage the spiritual nurture of our families.

Living out the Core Value of being *Family-Focused* will pay dividends for generations to come, so that *“your children and their children after them may fear the Lord.”*