

“Building the Next Great Generation” (part 1)

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

Have you ever noticed the strange similarities between adult children and their parents? I'm sure that you've seen those Progressive insurance commercials that aired a couple of years ago. A young couple is being interviewed, and the wife has concerns that her husband is becoming just like his dad. The tag line of the commercial said, “Progressive can't protect you from becoming your parents, but it can save you a bunch with home and auto.”

Even though there are generational differences, I find it interesting at just how much we become like our parents the older that we get, both in the way we look and in the way we act. There are roughly six generations that are said to have made up the last century of American life. The Greatest Generation were those born before 1924. They grew up during the Great Depression and fought in WWII or stayed behind and worked in factories. Following them is the Silent Generation, or the builders, born between 1925-1945. Then there are the Baby Boomers who were born between 1946-1964. Generation X was born between 1965-1980. Millennials were born from 1980-1994, which are now the largest generation. Generation Z are those who were born from 1995-2015.

The Bible tells us that parents transfer their values, both the good and the bad, from one generation to the next. That's why raising children is a sobering responsibility that has life-long consequences. What our children come to learn about God, life priorities, marriage, and family, they largely learn from what they have seen in our lives as their parents.

According to an article I came across on Business Insider from last April, America's youngest generations are less likely to marry in their 20s than their

parents were. Nearly 50% of baby boomers were married between the ages of 18 to 32, while a mere 26% of millennials are married in the same age range. From 1970 to 2012, the U.S. marriage rate dropped 60%—from 74 annual marriages for every 1,000 unmarried women down to 31. The decline in marriage rates among millennials reflects a number of cultural shifts. Other trends like the decline in religiousness have also shaped younger generations' views of marriage. Research also reveals that there has been a dramatic increase in a demographic known as the religious 'nones.'

James Emery White —*“So who are the nones? The short answer is that they are the religiously unaffiliated...And their numbers are rising faster than any group. The number in the 1930s and 1940s hovered around 5%. By 1990, that number had risen to only 8.1%, a mere 3% rise in over half a century. Between 1990 and 2008—just 18 years—the number of nones nearly doubled, jumping from 8.1% to 15%. Then in just four short years, it climbed to nearly 20%, representing one out of every five Americans. And for adults under the age of thirty, it increased to one out of every three people.”*

In a day where society seems to be unraveling at the seams, we need to look deeper than just the surface issues.

Tom & Richard Blackaby —*“Parenting has never been an easy task. However, the world in which we are raising our children today contains unique temptations, pressures, and dangers unlike anything our parents could have dreamed of when they were raising us. We live in an age when we desperately need God’s help if we are going to succeed in raising our children to be godly young adults.”*

How is the climate different in our day then it was in former generations?

Consider the following family statistics:

- Only 45% of children grow up in a home with both of their biological parents
- Current divorce rate in the U.S. is 46%
- Each month 282,000 students are physically attacked in public school systems
- The largest consumer of internet pornography is the 12 to 17 age group, and the average age of first exposure is 11

These are just a few statistics of the current cultural landscape that families are facing. I don't have to convince you that phones, universal wifi, and social media have drastically altered that landscape. Children today face a barrage of cultural pressures that you could not have even imagined when you were coming along. More than likely, you grew up in a society that was respectful or at least neutral toward biblical Christianity. Our children are growing up in a culture that is now anti-Christian and becoming more so by the day. What we need now more than ever are Christian parents who are committed to following Jesus and who intentionally lead their children to follow Him as well. The Bible has so much to say about the importance of one generation forming the next and the responsibility that parents have to lead their children in the truth. One of the most important passages where this is emphasized is here in Deuteronomy 6.

The word 'Deuteronomy' literally means "second law" or "repetition of the law." Here in this fifth book of the Old Testament, Moses reviews the law originally given at Sinai and applies it to Israel's life in the Promised Land which they were about to enter. The book of Deuteronomy records a series of addresses that Moses gave to the second generation of Israelites as he sought to equip their generation for their new life in the Promised Land. The older generation is to teach the younger generation principles for godly living. The best place where

this would occur is in the context of the home as one generation was to pass the faith along to the next. (Invest, Instruct, Impact)

1—INVESTING in the next generation (6:1-3)

“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 which you are going over, to possess it, 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. 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.”

Moses was clear in teaching the importance of worship to this second generation of Israelites. They needed to know all that God had done on their behalf so that they could then invest in their children. In the first five chapters of the book, he basically summarized all that the Lord had done for His people:

- In chapter 1, he reminded them of how God had given them victory over the Moabites and of the former generation’s refusal to trust God and enter the land.
- In chapter 2, he reminded them of how God sustained them during forty long years in the wilderness and how they had lacked nothing.
- In chapter 3, he reminded them of the victory that God had given them over Og the king of Bashan and all of his land and territory.
- In chapter 4, he reminded them of the need for their uncompromising obedience to God, and of how God had revealed Himself to Israel.

- In chapter 5, he reminded them of the law of God that is expressed in ten commandments.

Now that the foundation had been laid in their hearts and minds, in chapter 6 Moses explains the proper motives for obedience and why the people should honor God's law. If they wanted God's blessing on their lives once they entered the Promised Land, they needed to know that it would be based upon their love and obedience to God and whether or not they were leading their families to worship God faithfully. The current generation must not fail in their responsibility to invest in the next. He begins chapter 6 by calling on the Israel to teach their children to worship God.

Tedd Tripp—*“One of the most important callings God has given parents is to display the greatness, goodness, and glory of the God for whom they are made. Parents have the opportunity, through word and deed, to show children the one true object of worship—the God of the Bible.”*

Worship must first be taught at home. Before you say ‘amen’ to what I just said, stop and think about how hard this is in our current generation. One of the greatest challenges a committed believer in Jesus will face in our day is raising sons and daughters who worship God while surrounded by a cultural climate that is godless and increasingly pervasive. Many Christian parents in the church today have inadvertently allowed their home life to be determined by more of a cultural worldview than a biblical one.

Obedience to Christ is just one more area of an already compartmentalized life rather than being central to the family itself. The end result is a home life that looks no different from the average home in today's society, with the exception of church on Sunday. If you don't believe that today's average Christian family has

bought into cultural norms, just consider the things that are often deemed more important for children than their own personal relationship with Christ.

Charles Spurgeon — *“To neglect the instruction of our offspring is worse than brutish. Family religion is necessary for the nation, for the family itself, and for the church of God... Would that parents would awaken to a sense of the importance of this matter.”*

This is far cry from where we are today in our generation where the spiritual upbringing of children is neglected or at best outsourced to religious professionals.

Robert Dabney — *“The education of children for God is the most important business done on earth. It is the one business for which the earth exists. To it all politics, all war, all literature, all money making ought to be subordinated; and every parent especially ought to feel, every hour of the day, that next to making his own calling and election sure, this is the end for which he is kept alive by God — this is his task on earth.”*

Parenting—not politics, not the classroom, not the science lab, not even the pulpit—is the place of greatest influence.

We must intentionally teach our children to be worshipers of God. Never take for granted the influence that you have in their lives. What our sons and daughters come to learn about God, they must see it modeled in the example that we put before their eyes. Joshua would echo this same sentiment:

Joshua 24:15— **“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”**

Notice in these verses how Moses tells the people of Israel to be intentional in their worship and show generational faithfulness to God. He says that the commandment was for them, their children, and their children's children. To truly invest in the next generation requires we understand the importance of three things in our homes—the Word of God, the fear of God, and the blessing of God.

The Word of God (v. 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.”

Moses saw the home as the principal delivery system for the transmittal of God's truth from generation to generation. The responsibility rested squarely on mom and dad's shoulders. God intends for our homes to be saturated with the truth of His Word. Just consider what said just a few verses later:

Deuteronomy 6:7-9—“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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

The Word of God is to occupy a prominent place in our homes. The primary place where God's Word is to taught and practiced is in the home.

Voddie Baucham — *“Just a few generations ago a man was considered spiritually responsible if he led his family before the throne of God in prayer, read and taught the Scriptures at home, and led family devotions (among other*

things). Today parents are considered responsible if they find the church with the best-staffed nursery and the most up-to-date youth ministry.”

But unfortunately the biblical responsibility of parents to teach the Word of God to their children has been left behind. The average family spends more time with the remote control in their hand than they do gathered around the Word of God for worship and instruction. Our minds are to be informed by God’s truth, our decisions must be filtered in light of God’s truth, and our hearts must be passionate about God’s truth.

Psalm 119:9—“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Your word.”

What role does the Bible occupy in your home?

The Fear of God (v. 2)

“...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.”

The intention behind the law was fear and reverence for God. The word ‘fear’ used in this sense is not the fear that we are most familiar with, as in the fear of something that will harm. Rather, it is the fear that is associated with a healthy and reverential respect for something. This type of fear is the opposite of a nonchalant and disrespectful attitude.

Fearing God means having such a reverence for Him that it has a great impact on the way we live our lives. The fear of God is respecting Him, obeying Him, submitting our lives to His Word, and worshipping Him in awe.

Proverbs 1:7—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”

Proverbs 9:10—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”

Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13—“Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come...Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

Obedience must flow out of and lead to greater fear of the Lord. It is a true recognition of all that He is and an attitude of deep reverence and respect. Verse 2 says, “That you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son’s son.” How exactly could three different generations live in the fear of God? Verse 2 goes on to say “by keeping all His statutes and commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.”

God desires multi-generational faithfulness. When one generation fails to teach another the fear of God, the next generation will forget God altogether.

The Blessing of God (v. 3)

“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.”

If Israel obeyed the commands of God and taught their children to do so as well, it would go well for them in the land that they were about to enter. Somewhere around six times in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses refers to the Promised Land as a land flowing with milk and honey. It was an expression that described the richness and fruitfulness of the land. Milk was a staple food and honey was a sweet luxury, so a land that literally flowed with milk and honey would provide all

that the people needed. It was an expression that spoke of God's blessing in the lives of His people.

Generational faithfulness leads to multiplying impact.

Perhaps you have heard of Susanna Wesley. She was the mother of 19 children, 9 of which died before she did. Her husband Samuel was a clergymen in the church of England, and due to some bad financial decisions, was always in debt and even spent time in a debtor's prison. Through much adversity, Susanna dedicated her life to instilling a sense of worship and godly fear into each of her children. She was a remarkable woman. Born in 1669, she married Samuel Wesley when she was nineteen and they were married for 44 years. She bore 19 children. The frequent absence of her husband on business left the management of the household and the education of her children in her hands. She knew her fair share of hardship. The Wesley's suffered illness, disease, poverty, and the death of nine of their children. On two separate occasions, fire destroyed their home and nearly killed a daughter. But through it all Susanna accepted the will of God and placed herself and her family in His hands. Instead of complaining about the unfairness of life, she remained a surrendered Christian who taught not only through the Scriptures, but through her own example of daily trust in God. In some of her devotional writings, the woman who twice endured the loss of her home by fire and nine babies once wrote:

"Help me, Lord, to make a true use of all disappointments and calamities in this life, in such a way that they may unite my heart more closely with Thee."

In another place, she said:

"We must know God experientially, for unless the heart perceive and know Him to be to be the supreme good, her only happiness, unless the soul feel and

acknowledge that, she can have no repose, no peace, no joy, but in loving and being loved by Him.”

One of the greatest moves of God’s Spirit in modern history happened in the 1700’s and is often referred to as the Wesleyan Revival, simply because its roots can be traced to the ministry of two of her sons, John and Charles. At the beginning of the 18th century, England was a spiritual mess. It can be said without exaggeration that John and Charles Wesley’s efforts—their evangelism and ministry to the poor, the disenfranchised, and the hopeless—changed the world. It can also be said without exaggeration that who these great men were and all they did in their lives had everything to do with the extraordinary woman who raised them.

Proverbs 14:26—“In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.”

Dad and mom, nothing is more important than raising the next generation in the fear of the Lord. What politicians are arguing about right now, what people are trying to fix right now, God has given us the stewardship of. Again, remember:

“One generation plants the trees, another gets the shade.”

In other words, our generation lives in the shade of trees that were planted by our ancestors. The ideas of a former generation determined the kind of civilization we inherited from them. And our generation’s ideas will shape tomorrow’s culture for our children. The problem today is that there isn’t any shade. America gave up on the family a long time ago. We’re now reaping the bitter harvest. But that is where we as the church have an opportunity to stand out. We can plant some seeds now that will one day shade future generations from the blistering heat of an anti-Christian world.

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a tiny seed that a man took and sowed in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, when it has grown it is larger than all the plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. What seeds are you sowing into the hearts and minds of your little ones?

Matthew 19:14—“Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”

2—INSTRUCTING the next generation (6:4-19)

3—IMPACTING the next generation (6:20-25)