

“Building the Next Great Generation” (part 2)

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

Commander Rick Husband was a United States Air Force Colonel, an astronaut with NASA, and the space shuttle commander of the Columbia and was among the seven astronauts who were killed when the craft disintegrated after reentry into the Earth's atmosphere. In the book, “High Calling,” which is the biography of his life written by his wife Evelyn Husband, she said that he wanted to be an astronaut since his fourth birthday. It was the dream of his life, but there was something more important to him. More than anything in the world, Rick Husband was a committed believer who prioritized time with his children. His work sometimes took him away for extended periods of time, but he always managed to create ways to bridge the gap created by the time and distance. He was committed to leading his family to worship God, so much so that on one momentous trip, which would be his very last, Rick created a videotape with 18 daily devotions on it—one for each day he’d be gone.

“I can at least talk to them over the videotape and let them know I'm praying for them,” he said. There was nothing he could think of that was better than telling them about Christ. His devotional from February 1, 2003, included the following words to his daughter, Laura:

“It's Landing Day and hopefully, if the weather's good, I'll be landing today in Florida. I'm certainly looking forward to seeing you, Matthew, and Mama.” Rick read from Laura's devotional book and when he finished, he prayed for her.

“Okay, Laura, it won't be long before I see you! I love you very, very much...I'll see you in just a little while!”

Rick wanted both of his children, Laura and Matthew, to have a daily relationship with God. It's what had changed his life, and he knew it would sustain Laura and Matthew for the rest of their lives. Leading his family to worship and follow Christ was Rick's highest calling.

That very same day, February 1, 2003, Captain Rick Husband and the crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia died when the shuttle broke apart over north Texas during re-entry. His life was tragically lost, but the legacy he left behind for his children would live on.

Proverbs 20:7—“A righteous man walks in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him.”

Before worship will ever become powerful and life-changing in the church, it must first be prioritized in our individual lives and in our homes. There is nothing more important that we can do as families than to worship and teach our children to follow Jesus Christ. As goes the home, so goes the church. I read where the Puritans saw family worship so foundational that they would prevent a man from taking communion if he failed to lead his family in worship. Family worship is the foundation of Christian parenting. As family worship goes, so will go the family. The Puritans saw family devotion as the whole backbone of society.

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.” Within 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.”

In the first three verses, Moses tells the people of Israel to be intentional to 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. But unfortunately the biblical responsibility of parents to teach the Word of God to their children has been left behind. 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.

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.”

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. Around six times in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses refers to the Promised Land as a land

flowing with milk and honey. It was a picture that described the richness and fruitfulness of the land. It is an expression that speaks of God's blessing in the lives of His people. The same principle applies to parents today.

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

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 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.”

This passage of Scripture was among the most important passages in Jewish life. Their confession of faith was called the ‘Shema’ which means ‘to hear’ and was taken from this very text. The Shema is still recited twice a day by orthodox Jews all around the world. So important was the Shema that Jewish boys were required to memorize it as soon as they were able to speak.

Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy more than any other Old Testament writing. We read in Matthew 22 where on one occasion He was asked by a certain lawyer, “What is the greatest commandment?” Jesus quoted the Shema, found right here in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Loving God supremely is the most important thing in life, and this is what parents must teach their children.

How do we instruct the next generation about who God is?

A God who tolerates no rivals

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

Israel was surrounded by nations that worshiped all sorts of gods, but God's people affirmed to them all that there was only one true and living God. He alone was to be worshiped. This important truth was foundational to the law and is repeated over and over again in Scripture:

Exodus 20:3-5—“You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image...You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God.”

Exodus 34:14—“For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God.”

Isaiah 42:8—“I am the Lord; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to carved idols.”

Isaiah 48:11 —“My glory I will not give to another.”

God is not interested in us simply making Him one object of worship among others. He doesn't even want to be at the top of the list with other gods. He absolutely tolerates no rivals to His glory, and He will not share His glory with another. Our worship must exclusively belong to Him.

There is a reason why God said what He did in the second commandment, that He would visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him. This doesn't mean that He will punish children for their parents' sin, but that God will punish the sin patterns that children pick up from their parents. The reason is that idolatry is often hereditary. Dad's gods are often passed down!

Genesis 31:1-9—“Rachel stole her father's household gods.”

One of the first places that idols often gain an entry point into our lives is very early on in our home. Christian dads can say one thing to their children about worshiping God, but they often do another. It results in sending a mixed signal to our children about worship and devotion.

Maybe nowhere is the importance of this more clearly seen than in Psalm 78, a beautiful psalm written by Asaph praising the way that the Lord had taken care of Israel. They had received the testimony of God's truth, and Asaph reminds his generation that they must pass it on to the next. Psalm 78 reminds us what we are to teach our families about faithfulness to God and the danger that idolatry poses. The responsibility lies squarely on the shoulders of men.

Psalm 78:5—“He commanded our fathers to teach their children...”

John Knox—*“Of you it shall be required how carefully and diligently you have always instructed them in God’s true knowledge, how you have studied to plant virtue in them, and to repress vice.”*

The Lord declared this purpose in His promise to Abraham:

Genesis 18:19—“For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.”

Scores of dads and moms in the church are passing the buck when it comes to teaching their kids to worship and telling their kids who God is. No one has more influence in their lives than you do. Our lives will revolve around what we worship. Eventually, we come to resemble what we truly revere. When we give God nothing more than lip service in our homes, then we should not be surprised when our children grow up to be idolaters.

A God to be treasured in our lives

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

Of all the people on earth, the nation of Israel had every reason to love the Lord. As God’s covenant people, there was much that they knew about Him and about what He had done in their lives:

- They knew Him as Creator of all things
- They knew Him as the God of the fathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- They knew Him by personal experience; many of them had seen His mighty acts of judgement upon the Egyptians
- They witnessed His redemptive power in bringing them out of Egypt
- They had all eaten manna day after day, and quail; they had drunk water out of the rock
- Their clothes had not worn out and their sandals still protected their feet from the rocky paths they travelled

Those of us who know Jesus Christ—His life, His ministry, death and resurrection—and who have tasted of His grace have even greater reason to love God. It is to our shame that our love for Christ is often so half-hearted.

Our children deserve better than to see a half-hearted love for God on display in our lives. They need to see firsthand what it means for a mom and dad to love Jesus Christ with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our might. Our love for God involves the totality of the inner person—all of our heart, all of

our soul, and all of our might. It speaks of a total and complete devotion to the Lord.

Psalm 103:1—“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!”

“Heart” — *inner man, mind, will*

Notice here that love is commanded, not something that is left to the whims of emotion. This means that biblical love is an obedient act of the will. We choose to love God and others no matter how we may feel in the moment. It is a choice that we make in obedience to God.

“Soul” — *word is ‘nephesh’ and refers to desire, passion, and emotion*

Genesis 2:7—“Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul.”

To love God with all of our soul is to love Him with passion and emotion. It is not just some mechanical response, but rather speaks of love that is fervent and committed.

“Might” — *strength or force*

The idea is that of the actions of one’s life. It is not a word only love, but a love that manifests itself in action.

A God who transforms our thinking

“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.”

We need to teach the next generation that our God is a God who tolerates no rivals, a God who is to be treasured above everything else in life, and He is also a God who transforms our thinking.

“These Words” —*refers to the commandments*

God intends for His Word to be in our hearts. Again, the word for ‘heart’ refers to the seat of one’s decision-making, and the very core of one’s life.

Peter Craigie —*“...the people were to think on them and meditate about them, so that obedience would not be a matter of formal legalism, but a response based upon understanding.”*

It means that the goal of the Law was not to simply be head knowledge, but a heart knowledge that led to a change in their thinking and decision making. The knowledge of God and His Word is to be a grid through which we view the world around us with all of its pressures and challenges. We need a biblical worldview!

Voddie Baucham has said that a person’s worldview is comprised of five basic elements:

#1: View of God—atheism vs. theism

- The God of the Bible is personal
- The God of the Bible is sovereign
- The God of the Bible is holy
- The God of the Bible is Creator

#2: View of Man—evolution vs. special creation

- The Bible teaches that man is created in the image of God

- Human life has inherit dignity and value
- In Adam, the human race was plunged into sin
- Apart from the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, man remains in his sin

#3: View of Truth—relative vs. absolute

#4: View of Knowledge—naturalism vs. revelation

- We come to know truth through God's revelation in creation
- We come to know truth through God's Word

#5: View of Ethics—cultural vs. absolute

- God determines what is right and wrong
- God's Word gives us clear instruction on ethics
- Ethics transcend time and culture

Without a biblical worldview, our children will be exposed and vulnerable to the cultural traps that the enemy has laid. Those traps are hidden everywhere.

I heard the story about a man who sold pork as a butcher. This man had never bought any pigs. Rather, he had slaughtered wild pigs by the hundreds. A man from a neighboring village asked him one day, "How do you catch all of these wild pigs?" The man replied, "It's easy. I just get a big trough of food and put it low enough so the piglets can find it. When the piglets come to eat, the sow and the boar soon follow. While they are getting used to it each day, I start putting up a fence at night. Just one side. I do another side every night until all I have left is a gate. Eventually they come in, distracted by the sweetness of the food, and I close the gate without their ever knowing what had happened."

As Christian dads and moms, we need to raise children who have an ability to discern what the world puts before them, what Satan desires to use to lure them to the slaughter. The greatest need in the life of our children is conversion. They need to be saved, and that is something that only God can do for them.

Tell your children who God is. Tell them that He is a holy God who tolerates no rivals, that He is to be treasured above everything else, and that He transforms our thinking. Above everything else, preach the gospel to your children. Tell them that Jesus Christ died on a cross, rose again from the dead, and that He alone can save them. Tell them that He is to be Lord of their lives.

Recently, I was reading in Malachi and noticed something that I had never fully considered before. Malachi wrote concerning the coming of the Lord and said:

Malachi 4:5-6—“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

As we get closer to the end of the age when Jesus returns, the hearts of the fathers won't be toward their children and the hearts of the children won't be toward their fathers. A war will rage within the family. But there is power in the life changing gospel of the Lord Jesus! That is why faith in Jesus Christ is so crucial to happy home life. I don't know how families without the anchor of faith in Christ are really making it in times like these.

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. 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.”

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