

NEXT GEN SUNDAY
A Vision for Family Ministry
Deuteronomy 6:4-9
August 26, 2018 / Ryan Patty

Introductions/VBS/Next-Gen Sunday

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and open them up to Deuteronomy 6. Just last week we finished our series on half-truths and soon we will be starting in on Ephesians, but today is a vision Sunday for the children's ministry here at CCC. For the next generation that will be in our place before we know it!

A cynic once said, "A family today is a group of individuals sitting around a television." That stings some if we are being honest, because we recognize the perceived truth. We recognize the flood of media that seeks to consume all areas of our lives. But the Christian family is called to be something different, to live out something different, which we will come to see.

Therefore today will be a little different, so I want to explain it up front. This is a vision-sermon. The major emphasis for today's sermon will be the vision for children and family ministry here at CCC.

And before too many of you check-out, because you don't have kids in that area of ministry or you're single or your kids are grown and out of the house and you're enjoying being a grandparent, **don't!** Don't check out. I will address you. A vision for family ministry includes all of us which we will collectively come to see.

So back to Deuteronomy, specifically chapter 6. What's happened in the previous five chapters is helpful to know. All of these first chapters including chapter 6 are an address by Moses to all of Israel. He recounts the Lord's faithfulness, and Israel's stubbornness. He recounts how the Lord promised to bring them into the land, but Israel was too afraid of the inhabitants. Therefore they were punished and that generation had to die out. Moses recounts the defeat of King Sihon and King Og, and even his own failure and subsequent punishment of not being allowed to lead Israel into the promised land.

And then we come to chapter five and the giving of the Ten Commandments. The Lord relays to Moses who relays to the people these commandments written on stone tablets. This was a sign of the covenant between God and his people at Mt. Horeb. Israel is called here to be faithful.

And this brings us to chapter six, which serves as a summary chapter for the commandments and laws. It serves to distill all of it into something memorable, something to remind the people of who their God is. Let us now read the text together, Deuteronomy 6: 4-9.

“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. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Within the framework of family discipleship, there are three spheres to this text I want us to grasp. Three key aspects of family discipleship that undergird and drive the vision for the children’s ministry here at CCC but also speak to discipleship as a whole in the Christian life.

I have worked hard to make this memorable for you! 3 c’s to go with our church acronym. I kid, but nonetheless I do have 3 c’s for you from today’s text.

1. Command (v. 4-6)

- a. If Israel had a creed to their faith, v. 4 would be it. The ‘shema’ as this is known, just a transliteration of the first word we read as ‘hear’ from English into Hebrew was the all encompassing statement of the uniqueness of Yahweh. Hear this Israel!
 - i. This was to be compared and contrasted with the gods of the nations. The multiplicity of deities that other nations were enthralled with. But this was not what Israel was to believe or give into. There is an incomparability with Yahweh, an exclusivity that he deserved alone from their worship. This God is the covenant keeping God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God who delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, who was with them in the wilderness, and who is promising to deliver them into the promised land. The question naturally arises? What other so-called gods can even compare?
 - ii. The text says that God is one. In the triune Godhead this speaks to the unity within God. Father, Son, and Spirit. One God, three persons. Not multiple deities, not multiple gods. Yahweh is unique

in that he has chosen a people and has a relationship with them. He is not some idol of wood, but the true and living God.

- iii. So with that reality established in v. 4, we can then come to understand the command in v. 5 in its truest sense. (read)
- b. There are 3 components to this command, 3 ways in which we are to love God. They are easy enough to identify (with our heart, soul, and mind).
 - i. And rather than discuss these each individually, I want to hit on the statement as a whole. Moses here is calling the people to covenantal allegiance. To be faithful to the covenant as God is faithful to the covenant. And what he is saying is that our entire person, our entire being should love God. We love him with our heart, our soul, our mind, in other words the *very essence* of who we are.
 - 1. And within this allegiance is an implied loyalty and obedience. The commands outlined beforehand are to be lived out and obeyed in their day to day lives.
 - ii. Now in tying this back to families and the ministry to children, what I want us to see friends is that **the commands of God are blessings**. Within our Christian culture, our churches, and our households, we swing on this spectrum of Law and Grace.
 - 1. Legalists. They love the commands. They love the Law, delighting in it they nitpick everything.
 - 2. Antinomians. Grace people. They always error on the side of grace. Who needs the law, commands, there is grace for that.
 - iii. The failure for both groups is that neither truly understand God as *Father. A loving Father who cares for his children*. They have missed the mark. First words humans ever hear.
 - 1. **So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."** Genesis 1:27-28
 - 2. Too often obedience to the command has been tied to blessing. And there is some truth in that. If I obey, then I will be blessed. But we miss the important part. Notice in the text that the blessing comes in the form of a command. The commands of God are a blessing to His people. This is what we should be teaching the next generation. Too often

obedience is seen as the condition of God's love, the condition to his blessing. But rather obedience serves as the means to enjoy God's blessings.

- iv. But the reality of this first c of command is that it starts with us. (Read v. 6) **“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” Deuteronomy 6:6**
- v. Family and children ministry, the responsibility of raising the next generation of Christ-followers, starts with US heeding the command to love our God. To love Jesus, his teachings, his instruction. To be Christians ourselves. To have his word upon our hearts. For our emotions, thoughts, and actions to be captive to the love of Christ. So I don't want us to miss that. I don't want us to jump straight to the kids without first recognizing that we are called to love God. The parent, the married without kids, the single man, the single woman, the divorced, the separated, the retired. You are called to love God with all that you are, and then and only then, can you start to disciple.
 1. And this church is where I can elaborate on the “family.” Today and on-going you will hear the words family discipleship a lot. And in the smaller scale, I am predominately speaking to the immediate family. Those living in a house together where the majority of conversations take place. But there is a broader and grander scale to family that we belong to, and that's the family of God. If you are a Christian here today, you have been adopted into that family.
 - a. **John 1:12 “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”**
 - b. **Ephesians 2:19 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”**
 - c. So to those who don't have children, who are single, whose children are grown, and to the retired. We need your service. We need your wisdom. True family discipleship of the next generation involves all of us contributing to the next-generation. So serve somewhere in the church where you can aid that. Older couples get to know a younger family and impart your wisdom. Single men, single women, aid in the discipleship of teenagers. It takes a Gospel relational community to raise faithful kids. Children

need the input of their parents but also the input of the “Family of God”

- i. Proverbs 13:20 “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”
 - ii. Notice the wording. It says whoever walks. Not whoever listens, whoever hears, but whoever walks. We need to recognize our corporate responsibility in reaching out and raising the next-generation. Of passing the baton off if you will.
- vi. But in this discipling, in seeking to grow family discipleship at CCC, let us not miss that the commands of God are blessings in and of themselves. Teach your children this. Collectively we need to teach the next generation this. But the command to love God starts with us, and then moves outward. This brings us to our next C.

2. Cultivate

- a. “You shall teach them 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.” Deuteronomy 6:7
 - i. This is where you will start to notice the vision for our ministry coming heavily into the sermon.
- b. I want to say this clearly and then expound on it for you. The call and burden of raising the next generation, of discipling them, does not begin with the church. It begins in the home.
- c. God through Moses here first, as we saw, commands his people to love him, to obey him, to enjoy him forever. But now he commissions them to teach these things to their children, to the next generation. A few things to highlight that will help us better understand this verse.
 - i. teach/talk; sit/walk; lie/rise. These are common in the Hebrew language and are called ‘merisms’. These opposite terms refer not just to the actions they signify but to everything in between. (like our expression from A to Z). So in using these expressions Moses is instructing the people, and by extension us, to teach their children about God and his expectations in all contexts and areas of life. These truths are to permeate every area of the believer’s life.
 - ii. These truths are to be a part of the normal conversations within our households. From breakfast to bedtime conversations about God

should be included. I am by no means saying that you only have devotions 24/7 throughout the year. Nor am I at all against specific times in the morning, afternoon or before bed of reading and praying with your children. But foster a normalcy of talking about the works of God in all areas of life. Teach your children to cherish Christ not just in the extraordinary parts of life, but in the everyday mundane realities that we live in.

- d. So as we transition to our specific ministry, our vision and mission are created with the purpose of facilitating family discipleship.
- e. **Vision:** The Children's Ministry of CCC exists to glorify God by intentionally cultivating hearts of worship in children through the teaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ.
 - i. Not just knowledge we are after, but a changed heart. To me, as we have already looked at, Knowledge and the heart go hand-in-hand. We teach about Jesus with the underlying purpose of a changed and loving heart. Likewise when our hearts are changed we naturally want to both learn about Christ and know him more and more.
 - ii. But the question still arises of how? What are the means of accomplishing this vision? That's where the mission comes in.
- f. **Mission:** The Children's Ministry of CCC seeks to partner with parents to disciple the next generation of faithful Christ-followers.
 - i. More than anything else, we here at CCC desire for the children's ministry to be a parent equipping ministry. We are striving to communicate through our teaching and structure of ministry the importance of parents realizing that you are the primary disciple makers in the lives of your children.
 - 1. Not myself, nor pastor Eli, not the church, nor Sunday school, kids church, or youth gatherings. All of those things are supplemental to what you are doing at home. All of those things are to add to what is being communicated in the home.
 - 2. And this not to say that you guys are not already doing this, I know many of you are! But rather that our ministry ethos, if you will, needs to be an equipping one. Equipping, supporting, encouraging, and aiding you all in the discipleship of your children.
 - ii. So when I use the word cultivate to describe v. 7 this is in part what I am getting at. It takes hard work. It takes discipline. It takes

nurturing and pruning, digging and weeding out what's not ultimately good.

1. **Illus.** I can't help but think of my backyard when using this word. If there is a place in Idaho Falls that could be described as God-forsaken that would be it. It was almost 100% weeds. The nasty ones. So I have been in the process of killing everything off so now its 100% dead weeds. Plus there are stumps. One we got out, the other I will attack another day. Plus the previous owner loved playing horseshoes. But you can't just put rebar into the ground he had to pour a 2x2 foot block of concrete a foot down into the ground.
 2. So my wife and I have work to do. We want to cultivate our backyard to be a place we can one day hangout. Where my kids can actually play on the grass. We have a vision and a plan for doing that. So I say these things to remind us that at times, discipleship of the children isn't always easy. It isn't always pretty. Through the toddler years to the teenage years you will have immense joys, but probably many tearful nights. So I pray that we would strive to be a church that works hard at the discipleship of the next generation. That works hard to cultivate the hearts of the upcoming generation to see the beauty of Jesus Christ. To see him alone as the hope of this world.
- g. So in explaining the vision and mission, and how we are striving to equip parents, I want to highlight something you will see starting September 9th. We are moving the children's ministry in the direction of being unified in what we teach each week. Unified in the main passage being taught on. So for those of you who have kids in the children's ministry, and possibly in multiple age groups, we want to aid you in family discipleship.
- i. Starting that week and going forward you will notice a new insert into the bulletin. A family follow-up if you will. What it will do is highlight the main passage the children learned about today, and simply 3 or 4 questions (with the answers) to foster conversation with your kids. You can leave it in the car and dialogue with your kids as you taxi them around IF, you can take it home and build upon the questions throughout the week. It is simply another tool we want to give you to make talking about Jesus in your house normal. To build a foundation early on so that parents are the main communicators about God and his word to their children.
- h. And my goal is not to scare any parents with discipleship language. Some of you might be put off by that. Wondering how can I make time for family

discipleship. We are exhausted, the house is a mess, we can't add anything to our schedule. Well in light of that dramatic example, let me both encourage you and terrify you with a reality.

- i. You already are discipling your children. You are. They have been watching you since they were babies. Learning from you as they go.
 1. It's how my son who is three knows to yell out "OU" when they kickoff in an Oklahoma game.
 2. It's how my one year old daughter has watched her mom carry a diaper bag everywhere so now will carry around her Easter bag the same at home.
- ii. Now these are silly examples, but the reality is that they pick up the good and bad. Kids pick up how mom and dad treat one another. They pick up what you really believe about your faith, if it's something proclaimed from your mouth but not evident in your heart. They see you whether you want them to or not.
- iii. So discipleship is happening, we must realize that, and we must be proactive in shaping that discipleship to the glory of God. This brings us to our third c (recap)

3. **Community** (read)

- a. 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.
- b. In this framework, the means and method of discipleship are clear.
 - i. First, we heed the command to love God with all that we are.
 - ii. Then we faithfully teach the next generation and work to cultivate hearts that cherish Christ.
 - iii. Now we see our purpose, so that we might go out into the world as salt and light and continue to display God's glory through further disciple making.
- c. So what is happening in these verses? He says we should bring these teaching to our hands, and as frontlets between our eyes. Now the Jewish people made a practice of this, called phylacteries, in which they would bind pouches around their arms that would contain little scrolls with verses of the Torah written on them? Are we to take this literally?
 - i. Since I don't see any worn in here, I think it is clear that we don't do these literally, but the meaning is still plain to us. Bind these teaching to your hands and head. That is to your actions and

thoughts. Let these teachings instruct both how you think and act concerning everything in this world. It's a God-centered worldview.

- d. But then he continues into v. 9 and says to write them on the doorpost of your house and on the gates. These are the two primary points of access for the Israelites lives. On their door frames, so they see it as they enter and leave their house. On the gates of the city. This is where the center of public activity was. Where buying and selling took place. Where judicial decisions were rendered. So the idea is to put these reminders into the main areas of their lives. Those areas with the most visibility.
- e. So in tying in the community aspect for us, as we make disciples of the next generation, we remember the purpose. For them to grow up, go out into their communities, and make other disciples.
 - i. For them to grow up from into men and women who talk with their neighbors, friends, and families about the good news of Jesus. And for those they interact with to see that something is different about them. They have a hope not evident in our culture. A joy found only in knowing Jesus Christ.
 - ii. Family discipleship should always be remembered in light of expanding the family of God. We disciple with the purpose that our disciples would make disciples.

4. Closing

- a. So in closing, as the worship team and ushers make their way forward, In light of this being a vision sermon, there are a few things for us to keep in mind.
 - i. As we disciple the next generation, we must remember to love that child for who they are, not for who we want them to be. Love them in the now, not a future version of them. To encourage them in their walk with the Lord, but to lovingly provide correction and discipline with the purpose of growth as they need it.
- b. Parents, and by extension everyone in the family of God, let us never abdicate the responsibility to disciple this next generation. Let us never give it over to a school, to a club, to a sport, to sunday school; but let us heed the call to be the primary disciple makers of these children, of these teenagers. This doesn't mean that all education happens with us, that they won't learn from these other things, but rather that their primary character formation and education in wisdom should be from us. Not from the things of this world.
- c. Lastly, our kids don't need perfection. They don't need perfect dads or perfect moms to emulate, they need a Savior to hope in. So it's okay to apologize to them, to admit when you mess up, to ask for forgiveness, and

to point them to truly perfect one, our Savior Jesus who came down and died in our place, so that we might have eternal life. That church is who we always should be pointing them to. Would you pray with me?