

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 6

“ 1 Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which Jehovah your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear Jehovah your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as Jehovah God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’ 4 “Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one! 5 You shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

“Train Up a Child”

I am honored to be back in the pulpit here at Church of the King and the Saints at Reformation Covenant Church in Oregon City send their warm Christian greetings to you all. It was a blessing to see their new pastor Bo Cogbill installed and that health has been restored to that congregation.

Next week Jeff will continue his series on First John and the following week we will have Elder Andrew Richardson bring us the Word of God.

So rather than launch back into my series on the Book of Ephesians, I will take the opportunity this morning to do one of those back to basics topical messages: There will be little that is new, but that is often when we should pay very close attention!

We all know that Christian parents are responsible to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord! We also know that all of us join with them in that responsibility when they are brought to the Church for baptism.

For a child to be properly disciplined, they need at least three admonitions:

- They must hear and respond to the Gospel!**
- They must be instructed in the faith.**
- They must be called to obedience in their lives as they see the example of obedience in the lives of others.**

For this morning I want to remind us about how comprehensive God expects these admonitions to be and discuss one of the important tools we have for their instruction.

Let me begin with a quick review of the familiar passage I am using as our text this morning: It comes as Moses is preparing the people of God to conquer and enjoy the land that He promised to their fathers:

Deuteronomy 6:1 “Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which Jehovah your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear Jehovah your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.”

- Now of course statutes and judgments are what are found in the rest of Deuteronomy, so it should be no surprise that this Book of the Law is often quoted by Jesus during His earthly ministry!**

As we are often reminded at the Lord's Table, Jesus said He came that we might have life and life abundant, and that is reflected here as Moses continues:

3 "Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as Jehovah God of your fathers has promised you—"a land flowing with milk & honey."

And yes, even back here in the Books of the Law it begins with the Gospel:

4 "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one! 5 You shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart."

- All of the commandments cannot help a lost soul unless there has been a changed heart, something the Apostle Paul reminded his proud Jewish brethren of in Romans chapter two...

"28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."

Our children must hear the Gospel because it is how God changes hearts as Paul clearly taught in Romans 1:

"16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Paul says that our right living is from faith to faith, from a changed heart to an obedient heart. And only God can change a heart which is why faithful parents bring their covenant children to the Church for baptism: They are declaring that they are helpless to save their children and are fully dependent on God for their salvation! We bring them to Jesus and then we teach them the commandments of Jesus because Jesus said that if we love Him we will keep His commandments!

Again we see this clearly in the instructions that Moses gave and he reminds us about how comprehensive this instruction must be:

7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

To remind us about how important this comprehensive instruction must be, the Spirit has Moses return to this in Deuteronomy 11: "18 "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 19 You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 20 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, 21 that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which Jehovah swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. 22 "For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do—to love Jehovah your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him— 23 then Jehovah will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves."

When we see the importance of such comprehensive training, we should be reminded of the importance of these familiar passages:

Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it."
[both views of this verse are true]

Ephesians 6:4 “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

So again, our children need to hear the Gospel, our children must be instructed in the faith and our children must be called to obedience and shown by example how we are to live by faith!

Now I would like to focus now on the instruction of our covenant children. It begins with our own instruction, as parents and fellow laborers.

Some of you are blessed to have been brought up in the faith as young Timothy was and so you begin the instruction of your children from a good foundation. Some of us had to play catch up, coming to faith later in life but can now be excited to see some of our own children raising the next generation from the beginning. In either case our own instruction is important: Both the necessity of learning and being a good example.

- **We cannot teach what we do not know and practice.**

We also know that one of the best ways to grow in our own understanding is to be teaching those little ones:

- **Often bringing a certain truth down to the level of a young child makes that very truth more real, and often convicting, for us as well.**

There are many tools that we have to help in their instruction, and I want to discuss one important one in more detail... But we must never forget the power and value of just keeping ourselves and them in the Word!

An important tool that we encourage people to use are catechisms: A teaching tool that uses a series of questions and answers to teach us. Our weekly worksheets include some from the Children’s catechism and the Westminster Shorter catechism.

This can begin at a very young age!

- **I suspect that most of our young ones know the opening questions in the children’s catechism:**
- **Who made you? God!**
- **What else did God make? All things!**
- **Why did God make you and all things? For His own glory!**

Simple enough for a child to learn and yet teaching us great truths that we can ponder all of our lives: AND ponder with our children at home or away, when they rise or go to bed, just as Moses encouraged parents to do! As children grow older, I encourage the use of the Heidelberg Catechism because it systematically teaches us about the faith, but does so in the first person, beginning with ‘what is your only comfort in life and in death?’

The Heidelberg Catechism was composed in the city of Heidelberg, Germany, in 1563: One of the most enduring of the many catechisms that came out of the reformation: The new catechism was intended as a tool for teaching young people, a guide for preaching in the provincial churches, and a form of confessional unity among the several Protestant factions. The project was the work of a team of ministers and university theologians and was approved by a synod in Heidelberg in January 1563.

- **Working through this catechism clearly presents the Gospel, teaches the basics of the faith and calls us to obedience, which is our stated goal in raising children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.**

The Heidelberg begins with the Gospel by teaching us about the misery of man and then the redemption of man. It goes on to teach us about the faith using the Apostle’s Creed as a guide.

It then covers the authority and sacraments of the Church. The final section is titled ‘our thankfulness’ where the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer are used to instruct us about the Christian life.

The catechism is both personal and practical: For example, the discussion of the Ten Commandments includes instructions about not just what is forbidden but also what is commanded as positive action! In the questions and answers with regard to the Sixth Commandment the catechism not only rightly teaches us that we are not to kill our neighbor but that we are to love our neighbor and do them only good, which is how we see Jesus teach in His Sermon on the Mount!

For those who might struggle with just how to do a simple family devotion around a breakfast table, or in the evening, the Catechism can be a great way to begin. It is divided into 52 groups for weekly study or you can simply move along with one question at a time: For example, the first question is what I just referenced: Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

- That question and answer is actually a summary of all that would be learned so it is great place to begin!

That answer comes with ten footnotes that reference nineteen verses or passages for further study. So, a simple devotion could consist of reading the question and answer and discussing what it teaches.

- You could then have the readers in the family divide up some of the Scriptures, read them and then discuss the answer again.

We clearly see the importance of teaching our children and other in the Gospel accounts: Luke reminds us about this right at the beginning: Luke 1:1 “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.”

The Apostle John summarizes his work at the end: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” *John 20:30-32*

The Apostle Paul rejoiced that young Timothy followed his example:

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.”

And we must not only be such good examples but assure our children that Jesus delivers all of us as well... John 17:14 “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”

Communion Meditation: I Corinthians 10

“10 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.