

A Godly Man's Love For the Mind of His Child

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – the command for a father to love his children by addressing their intellectual life and reason
2. aim – to cause us to truly love our children and grandchildren by teaching them doctrine and theology
3. passage – Deuteronomy 6:1-7

b. outline

1. Teaching a Child to Know God (Deuteronomy 6:4)
2. Teaching a Child to Love God (Deuteronomy 6:5)
3. Teaching a Child to Talk About God (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

c. opening

1. the place of the mind in **modern culture**
 - a. W civilization has access to more information than any previous generation in human history
 1. the internet can bring every imaginable kind of information (good and evil) directly to the technology that we hold in our hands – we have an **over-abundance** of it coming at us
 - a. **e.g.** social media is a quagmire of competing ideas and ideologies (some good, most evil)
 2. yet, this massive quantity of information has produced a *debilitating effect*: a form of information *overload* that causes (many) people to “withdraw” from any attempt to collate and understand what is coming at them – they simply stop “thinking,” and only “observe” (**see below**)
 - a. **e.g.** they quickly hit the “like” button under something that “tickles their ears”
 - b. W civilization has become *subsumed* under a secular ideological framework for existence
 1. namely, the rejection of a Judeo-Christian worldview (which begins with a Creator) for the embrace of a humanistic or secular worldview (which begins with the self)
 - a. **e.g.** the central tenet of Darwinian evolutionary theory: human beings are but bits of evolved flotsam, searching the world looking for pleasure, *but without any existential purpose*
 - b. **e.g.** an *anti-Christian society* that has embraced *relativism*, even to the point of proposing that there is *absolutely no transcendental truth* but what is *assumed by the individual*
 - c. **i.e.** and now, the “evolution” of that society into the *immutable truth* that the “feelings” of the individual (over any group experience) trump any “scientific” or rational truth statement
 2. **LOW**: a world in which the individual gets to decide (for himself) what is “true” (because it makes him or her “happy”), and that everyone else must “celebrate” it *even if it is self-destructive*
 - c. W civilization has embraced a form of “higher” education that caters to this new worldview
 1. namely, that the university is no longer about teaching young adults *how* to think, but rather *what* to think = the indoctrination of “leftist” ideologies centered around the individual
 - a. **e.g.** safe spaces; flash mobs rising against professors who don’t “toe the line”; etc.
 2. and, since the young adult mind *at this age* is most susceptible to other ideologies, those leaving a “Christian” home and entering university are particularly *vulnerable*
2. the place of the mind in **a Christian worldview**
 - a. biblical Christianity is a worldview built upon an objective set of realities in time and space, *and* a revelation making sense of those realities *in words* (**2 Timothy 3:16**)
 1. **e.g.** human sexuality is built upon the objective realities of a Creator forming a unique creature upon the earth, bearing his image, and being formed male and female (**Genesis 1:27**)
 2. **e.g.** the relationship of man to his world is formed by the *objective standards* of a *law*, flowing from the nature of a holy God to the creature, designed to override the desires of the creature
 3. **e.g.** the relationship of sinful man to his holy Creator is formed by the testable realities of God *himself* entering into human history, living, dying, *and being raised from the dead*
 - b. biblical Christianity assumes that human beings are able to *understand* these things *intellectually*
 1. they are not “feelings” or subjective fantasies, but *testable truths* that form **a consistent grid of knowledge (theology)** in the which the human mind can “lay hold” – **faith is built on truth**
 2. **i.e.** Christians are a *thinking people* – they are not “led around” by their feelings, but come to grasp deep intellectual concepts made known to them by the Spirit of Truth (**John 15:26**)
 3. **e.g.** the N.T. writers are consistently *teaching*; Jesus was considered a *rabbi* (teacher); etc.
 - c. **biblical Christianity is based on the precept that human beings have been given a mind (a rational ability) and that we are to “think God’s thoughts after him” (Johann Kepler)**

3. the place of the mind in **the Christian household (Deuteronomy 6:1-3)**
 - a. **question:** what will *inevitably* happen to the child who has only been taught to “believe in Jesus” when he leaves home to attend university? how will he or she remain “faithful” to Christ there?
 1. or, what do *you* think will happen to a child, whose entire understanding of Christianity is “Jesus loves me, this I know,” when he or she encounters a university environment that screams *every minute of every day* that belief in God is foolish and Christianity is *hateful*??
 2. **answer:** the child’s faith (whatever it was) will be destroyed! in his or her most *vulnerable years intellectually*, the child will cave to the pressure and renounce the faith (apostatize)
 - b. **thesis: the godly man loves his child by making sure that the child is fully catechized in “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) before that child is released into the world**
 1. **the godly man loves the mind of his child** by taking the responsibility to make sure it is filled with the truths of the Christian faith, with an ability to know both *what* is true **and why it is true**
 2. **the godly man teaches his child how to think** – to use the gift of rational thought – to reason out a Christian worldview and to *apply that worldview to everything in his or her life*
 - c. Moses’ point from **Deuteronomy** – a *recapitulation* of the history and law of Israel, to encourage the Israelites to remain faithful to the Lord **and to teach future generations these truths**
 1. **Deut. 1-4:** Moses reminds them of where they have come from, and some previous “issues”
 2. **Deut. 5:** Moses restates the Decalogue as the foundation of Israelite life and culture
 3. **Deut. 6:** Moses focuses on the importance of passing that knowledge to the next generation
 - a. **read vv. 1-3** – “*this is the commandment*” = that which Moses received from God and taught them, which they must now pass along to “*your son and your son’s son*”
 - b. **read vv. 4-7** – “*hear, O Israel*” = the most important elements of a godly point of view, and the command to make sure that the child fully understands (**i.e.** so he might do them too)

I. Teaching a Child to Know God (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Content

a. the Shema (or Shema Israel)

1. the central tenet of the Israelite understanding of God (**quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:29**)
2. it is the title (beginning) of a confession (spoken in prayer) that begins in **6:4-9**, and continues in **11:13-21** and **Numbers 15:37-41** (the morning and evening prayers; from **v. 7**)
3. it is a *fundamental statement* of the nature of *Yahweh* in relationship to the Jewish people
 - a. “*Hear*” (*Shema*) = listen; hear; hear and do; accept – a call to *understanding*
 1. the Shema begins with the command to *understand* who God really is, by nature
 - b. “*O Israel*” (*Yisrael*) = the people of Israel; the whole of the congregation; all in the covenant
 1. the Shema is a call for *all the people* of Israel to “draw near” (**i.e.** to hear God)
 2. this becomes the basis of “*teach them ... to your children*”: *all of Israel* is to understand this
 - c. “*the Lord*” (*Adonai*) = the tetragrammaton; YHWH; the name of God (translated LORD)
 1. **note:** good Jews would not speak (nor write) the true name of God (**i.e.** YHWH; I am)
 2. the Shema is a confession of a *specific* God, one who has revealed *himself*
 3. and, his name represents the totality of his character *in relation to his people*
 - a. **e.g.** he is holy – his “uniqueness” is what makes Israel unique – they are *set apart*
 - d. “*our God*” (*Eloheinu*) = the plural first-person possessive of *Elohim*
 1. the Shema is the truth that *Yahweh* possesses the people *and the people possess him*
 2. **i.e.** they are in a *covenant relationship* with the One True God, who has *formed them*
 3. Israel does not have a relationship with an “*idea[ology]*”, but with a God who has revealed himself in a *real and concrete* way to a specific people for a specific purpose
 - e. “*the Lord is One*” (*Adonai Echa*) = the unified and cardinal number *one* applied to LORD
 1. the Shema is a confession of *unilateral monotheism* – there is *no other “god”* – *Yahweh* alone is deity, and all other religious entities are but “*fictions*” in the minds of men
 2. **i.e.** Judaism is a fundamentally and fiercely monotheistic view of the spiritual realm
 - a. a lesson the Israelites would often forget as they “mingled” amongst the Canaanites

b. the love of a man for his child to know God

1. the first (and most fundamental) truth a man can teach his child: **who God is!**
 - a. **i.e.** that there is a God (a Creator) who has revealed himself to us, is *knowable*, is the fountain of all life and wisdom, is the standard (in himself) of all that constitutes good and evil, and who is to be the focus of all of life and godliness (above all other “gods”)
 - b. **and (most importantly):** that Jesus Christ is the fullest revelation of God’s nature, God’s purposes, God’s promises, God’s providence in the world (**i.e.** the Gospel of faith alone)

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II. Teaching a Child to Love God (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Content

a. the *Great Commandment*

1. (as in the *Shema*) quoted by Jesus in **Mark 12:29**, in answer to the question “*what is the greatest commandment?*” – an attempt to “trap” Jesus, but (in this case) a statement of faith by the scribe
 - a. **note:** Jesus adds “*the mind*” to the equation, but that is not *specifically* significant (i.e. it is not Jesus’ intention to call attention *specifically* to an intellectual love of God)
 - b. it is a *fundamental statement* of what it means to *respond to God* out of the knowledge of him
 - a. the various elements (i.e. heart, soul, mind, strength [body]) imply the totality of the *Imago Dei*
 1. i.e. everything that makes human beings unique as creatures *intimately* created by God
 - b. it means that we are to love God with every aspect of our very nature as being created in his image
 3. **question:** but, what does it mean to “love” God (given the *emotional* nature of love common today)?
 - a. i.e. love (in this culture) no longer has any meaning; it’s a word so overly used, it has lost its value
 - b. **answer (biblically):** love is commitment – not a “feeling” that waxes/wanes with circumstances, but a commitment to someone based on an immutable reality (**1 John 4:10**)
“*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*”
 1. i.e. the eternal commitment of God for his people *in spite* of their rejection of him
 - c. **answer (contextually):** love is obedience – it is not just “knowing” God (intellectually), but actually striving to serve him as the outgrowth of his love for us (**2 John 6**)
“*And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.*”
 1. i.e. the embrace of Christ as *both Savior and Lord* – to live as a (loving!) slave to Christ Jesus

b. the love of a man for his child to love God

1. the next most important truth a man can teach his child: **what God expects!**
 - a. i.e. that coming to Christ (the fullest revelation of God) is to come *surrendering to him* in faith and obedience, to putting oneself *fully* (in every aspect) into trusting Christ with all of life
 - b. **and (most importantly):** to becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ, to confess *him* fully before the world and to make *him* **the object of deepest affection**

III. Teaching a Child to Talk About God (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

Content

a. the topic of *theology*

1. and you “*shall talk of them*” – lit. you shall do *theology*
 - a. theology = theos (God) + logos (to speak forth): to speak of God, to talk about God
2. it is a *fundamental statement* of what it means to *relate to God* in all of life
 - a. speech is one of the most *profound* elements of the *Imago Dei* in us (**see James 3**) – it is our God-given ability to *articulate* complex concepts and to *communicate them* to others
 - b. therefore, the person who *knows God* and *loves God* will not be able to help *talking about God*
 1. to God – in prayer, communicating with the Living God who has revealed himself *in words*
 2. to one another – in discipleship, communicating the deep truths of God to build faith
 - a. **the point of Moses:** teach your children *through words*; **let them see it modeled in you**
 3. to the world – in evangelism, proclaiming the truth about evil and God’s response to it

b. the love of a man for his child to talk about God

1. the final important truth a man can teach his child: **to talk about God!**
 - a. i.e. that Christianity assumes a *dialogue* about God, *both* with other believers *and* with the lost – to be willing to *disciple* others, both to an initial faith in Christ and to a deeper walk with him
 - b. **and (most importantly):** to speak the *truth in love* – to always be ready to give a defense for the hope that is within him, and to do so with gentleness and reverence (**1 Peter 3:15 NASB**)
2. **men: love the *mind* of your child – teach him or her to know the true God (in every way), to love Christ (in the fullest of obedience), and to talk of God (at every opportunity)**