

## The Most Important Passage (Family Foundations, Part 11)

The next four Lord's Days leading up to Easter Sunday we will be continuing and concluding our study in Psalm 119, but for this morning, as we did once last month I want to one more time look at a message in our Sunday evening series on Family Foundations, Part 11, which I've called "the Most Important Passage." We will also continue going through our verse-by-verse study of the book of Genesis in the evenings later this month, going through the story of Noah and the ark and the flood, but this morning's message concludes our focus on the foundational family truths we see in the start of the Bible. Today we look at another passage not in early Genesis that I've long felt may be the most important passage, not just for this subject, but for all of the life of all of God's people.

Sometimes people will ask you what your favorite book of the Bible is or your favorite verse, and for me, that has always been a tough question. As a preacher, I often find that my favorite book is whatever book I'm studying. Of course, all Scripture is not only inspired equally but is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness – and yet, I don't think it's too bold to say that some portions or passages are especially foundational or of most vital importance, because even Jesus spoke of "weightier matters of the law" and the Paul also speaks of things of "first importance," and Hebrews speaks of particular foundational truths.

If I were to ask you all not what your favorite passage is, but what you believe the greatest or most important passage in Scripture is, that would be a tough question as well, and perhaps not a completely fair question. Think for a moment how you would answer. No doubt there would be many different answers and I also suspect that none of you would answer with the passage we're going to look at today. But let me begin by asking a different question: *What is the most quoted Bible passage in all of history?*

- ➔ I would suggest it's not John 3:16, Psalm 23, Romans 8:28
- ➔ I would argue that this passage is the most quoted in all history, because for thousands of years it has been recited by faithful Jews at least twice daily, morning and evening (so at least you know which testament this passage is in)
- ➔ It's read before every synagogue service even to this day

- ➔ Historically, as the Jews were scattered all over, one writer said the greatest single bond that held them all together was the truth and belief professed in this text
- ➔ Jewish boys were taught this verse as soon as they could speak. It was called the believer's "Confession of Faith"
- ➔ The faithful throughout life were bound to repeat the passage in their devotions and it was to ever be on one's lips, living or dying, as the utmost expression of one's faith
- ➔ This most-quoted-passage-ever I am going to argue is also the most pivotal and critical passage. It is not the most famous or most familiar text, but we need to become familiar with this passage, which is Deuteronomy 6:4-9

If that reference doesn't sound familiar to you, then this even more confirms our need to study this passage today. This text has been considered one of the most important, if not the most important text in all of the Old Testament, and as I have studied it, I don't think we can overstate or over-estimate the value of this passage. *Can we really say if one text is the greatest in all of Scripture?*

Someone actually asked Jesus Himself that question in Matthew 22<sup>35</sup> One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, **which is the greatest commandment** in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied [quoting Deuteronomy 6:5] ... <sup>38</sup> This is **the first and greatest** commandment. (NIV)

Jesus quoted from this chapter a number of times, in fact in His temptation in the wilderness, Jesus responded to Satan with Scripture by saying "It is written." It's interesting that all 3 of his quotations coming from Deuteronomy 6 & 8 – this is a pretty important section of scripture. During Christ's 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, it seems He was meditating on Deuteronomy which was written for Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. Jesus who fulfills the Torah, quotes from this section in particular on that day.

Jesus also said the whole Law and Prophets can be summarized by and depend on this verse from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and one other verse. In some of the Hebrew manuscripts, the beginning and ending letter of the Deuteronomy passage is really big to focus special attention on this verse as being very important. Jesus essentially affirmed that the Jews were right to put the importance on this passage that they did. So while we want to be careful not to rank some parts of the Bible more than others (ex: NT better than OT or Paul better than James) Jesus affirmed great importance here

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NASB95) <sup>4</sup>“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! <sup>5</sup>“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup>“You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up. <sup>8</sup>“You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. <sup>9</sup>“You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

*Now turn forward to Mark chapter 10.* If today were the Sabbath and you were in a Jewish synagogue yesterday, the congregation would rise in honor of the Torah scroll as it is brought out from its protective case and opened, and that very passage would be read or recited: *Shema Isra-el Adonai Elohe-nu Adonai Echad*. “Shema” is the Hebrew word for “hear” and in fact they called this passage the Shema, so if you are speaking with a Jewish person and mention the Shema, that refers to the whole revered passage we just read

This passage was essentially the national motto of Israelites, it was like their “pledge of allegiance” to Yahweh, and was as familiar to them as kids who pledge allegiance to the flag of our nation.

Some of the Rabbis even taught that the reciting of the passage “is the taking of the kingdom of heaven upon thee.” It was interesting as Jesus interacted with one of them in Mark 12, how our Lord did tie in and speak of God’s kingdom after quoting this verse.

Mark 12:28-34 (NASB95) <sup>28</sup> One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “**What commandment is the foremost of all?**” [literally, “first,” i.e., “first importance.”] <sup>29</sup> **Jesus answered, “The foremost [or “most important” ESV] is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; <sup>30</sup> AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ <sup>31</sup> “The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ **There is no other commandment greater than these.**” <sup>32</sup> The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; <sup>33</sup> AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE’S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is **much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.**” <sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are **not far from the kingdom of God ...**”**

Jesus Himself said there is no greater or more important command than this, and affirmed that all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices, the whole OT revelation of God to Moses and His people and their greatest task can be summed up in this very vital unrivaled text.

MSB: ‘The rabbis had determined that there were 613 commandments contained in the Pentateuch, one for each letter of the Ten Commandments ... Those laws were also divided into heavy and light categories, with the heavy laws being more binding than the light ones. The scribes and rabbis, however, had been unable to agree on which were heavy and which were light.’

Jesus shows what God wants most and rebukes them elsewhere for their meticulous self-righteous acts while “neglecting the weightier matters of the law” (ex: true love to God and others from the heart)

You can turn back to Deuteronomy 6. The *Shema* has been called the pivot around which everything else in Deuteronomy revolves:

- It has a central location in context of the book: chapter 5 is the where Moses repeats the 10 Commandments, and chapter 6 has the first word of Moses’ instruction to Israel after the 10 Commandments have come as direct word of God to them and they have requested Moses to stand between them and God and pass on His truth to them
- This chapter is also a bridge between the Ten Commandments and the other instructions given in the statutes and ordinances (through Deuteronomy 26), and the rest of the commandments are really specific and concrete applications of the principles in the *Shema*

HEAR (v. 4) = PAY ATTENTION AND OBEY in Hebrew. That is, to hear God without putting into effect the command is not to hear him at all. The singular form of the verb emphasizes the corporate or collective nature of the addressee, God’s people.

As followers of Jesus today, are we hearers in this biblical sense of the Word? Are we doers? Are we here today because it’s the thing to do and we like hanging out with nice people, or do we have a motivation above all to *obey* God more and more every time we encounter His word? May God give us ears to *truly hear* what He wants us to obey and apply from this most important passage.

### ***1. Pursue A Right View of God – v. 4***

The passage starts where we must start, with a right and high view of God as He really is, revealed in His Word. The *Shema* starts by declaring that there is only one true God, the Lord, *Adonai*. This great passage begins with a claim, not a command. It starts with your view of God, before it gets to you and what you must do.

This is always the order of Scripture from Genesis 1:1 on – it is not about us, but is about God first and foremost. The story of Scripture is not *your story*, it's His story and it's for His glory. This book is not mainly of you, for you, and to you, but it is “of Him and through Him and to Him, to God be the glory.” Its chief end is to glorify God, and the good news is those who turn from self-centeredness to God-centered faith get to enjoy Him forever.

“The initial function of the Shema is to identify the One for who this people will be the center of being and value and to begin to characterize the nature of the relationship between God and people” (Miller, *Interpretation Commentary*, 98).

This God-exalting starting point is also seen in the prior chapter. Notice how God reveals the Ten Commandments in this order:

**Dt 5:6-7** ‘**I am the LORD your God** who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **You shall** have no other gods before Me ...

Notice that just like the Shema, the Ten Commandments also begin with a claim, not a command. It starts with who God is and the importance of having a right and high view of Him, and putting nothing before Him. All things are from Him, through Him, to Him. Before He says “you shall” He says “I Am.” Doctrine comes before our duty. We must know who God is before we know how we must live. The first half of the Ten Commandments are all about God before it gets to us and our fellow man.

The first of the Ten Commandments and the *Shema* are very similar – the first commandment at Mount Sinai was “you shall have no other gods before me” and the *Shema* says the “Lord alone is God.” He is one in the sense of the only God, and so this is a confession that Israel’s loyalty should also be one, there can be no Gods before Him, because the LORD alone is God. It is God and God alone that is to be our focus.

Another translation or nuance of Deuteronomy 6:4 is that the Lord is “one” – He is singular as opposed to the many gods of ancient false religion who were capricious, unpredictable, and always changing, the One and Only God of Israel is faithful, consistent, and not divided within mind, heart, or self in any way.

Scholars debate what the exact translation and nuance is – God’s oneness or the fact that there is none other – but both are certainly true biblically and Mark 12 gives some insight that the Jews and even Jesus allowed for both interpretations. We read that text earlier and after Jesus quoted the *Shema*, the response was “You have truly stated that He is One, and there is no one else besides Him ...Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently ...”

The oneness of God that the *Shema* speaks of is the classic statement of monotheism (mono=one, theism=God) as opposed to polytheism (multiple gods) of all other ancient cultures.

A Jewish friend and former co-worker of mine not too long ago said about this verse, “Christians don’t believe the Shema, do they? Christians believe there is three gods, not one?” And I explained to my friend that actually this passage is the foundation of our faith as well, and was most important to Jesus Christ. Christians believe there is ONE God but the scriptures indicate there is more than one person known as this ONE God, united, co-eternal and co-equal.

Interestingly, the same Moses who wrote here that God is one, uses the same Hebrew word for “one” in the familiar passage of Gen. 2:24 “a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two shall become ONE flesh” - same Heb. word *echad* – ONE in unity, essence, or being, but more than one person. This is the Christian view of God rooted in the Heb. OT:

- inseparable unity but the Hebrew Scriptures also reveal a personal Spirit -> Gen. 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” ... v. 3 “and the Spirit of God was moving over the water” ... v. 26 “Let us make man in *our* image” ... v. “God created man in His own image” (not angels)
- Psalm 110:1 says “the LORD said to my Lord” (more than one person, but David believed in only one God)
- The scriptures also reveal a coming Messiah who Isaiah 9:6 said would be born and would be called the “Wonderful Counselor, *the Mighty God*” (same phrase used for God the Father in next chapter - 10:21)
- Isaiah 7:14 said a virgin would conceive a boy who would be named Emmanuel = God with us
- There is some mystery in the Trinity, but we believe it because the Bible teaches it.

We need to start with a right view of God, the full God revealed in the Bible, this is the first point in our outline.

## 2. Pursue a Radical Love for God – v. 5

**Dt 6:5** “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*”

Verse 4 had the Great Confession of Israel, now v. 5 has the Great Commandment.

The oneness of the Lord your God must be matched by the oneness and totality of your devotion and love to God and God alone.

The Ten Commandments in chapter 5 are mostly “you shall not” but now in our passage we have a “you shall.”

It’s been said that this command really summarizes the first half of the Ten Commandments. And Lev. 19:18 summarizes the second half which deals with how we relate to others. That’s why the New Testament says that the whole Law and Prophets are really summed up in these two verses.

Deuteronomy, more than anywhere else, emphasizes how we must love God:

- This of course can and should include affections, but it is not a mere human emotion or passing passion
- It is a personal, intimate, trusting relationship with commitment, even when the feelings aren’t fully there
- It means to be loyal, to commit in a covenant relationship like a marriage; whether you have warm and fuzzy emotions or not for the other person is irrelevant -- you are to love and serve them loyally and selflessly, that’s biblical love
- Moses didn’t leave it unclear about how to love God – he consistently links it with walking in God’s ways, in obedience, in reverence, in service, in keeping God’s law:

**Dt 10:12** “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but *to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,*

**Dt 11:1** “You shall therefore **love the LORD** your God, **and always keep** His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments.

**Dt 11:13** “It shall come about, if you **listen obediently** to my commandments which I am commanding you today, **to love the LORD your God and to serve Him** with all your heart and all your soul,

**Dt 11:22** “For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, **to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and hold fast to Him,**

**Dt 19:9** if you **carefully observe** all this commandment which I command you today, **to love the LORD your God, and to walk in His ways always ...**

**Dt 30:16** **I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments** and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it.

**Dt 30:19** “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,

**Dt 30:20** **by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life ...”**

SUMMARY: To love the Lord, then, involves fearing and reverencing Him, following Him, obeying Him, serving Him, being loyal to Him, walking in His way, keeping His Word, observing carefully His Word, holding fast to the LORD.

And this is the basis for human love as well – we are not to love others more than God or in the exact way that God’s exclusive whole-hearted love demands, but if we love our neighbor, we will also serve our neighbor, and there will be loving actions from the heart. If we love our spouse, we will not only serve them, but we are also called to hold fast to them in covenant love commitment.

Now look back at the second half of 6:5: **“with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might”**

There were a number of times in those verses I read and in others where God’s people are commanded to love Him, sometimes it adds “with all your heart,” and in a few cases it says “with all your heart and with all your soul.” This is the only place where it says we must love with all three including our mind or might. This is the superlative, heaping every possible phrase about the inner and outer person to emphasis the totality of the commitment and love.



*Heart* – in Heb. this includes thinking and internal faculties

*Soul* – can be translated life or self, the whole person, esp. inner

*Might* – substance, strength, etc.

These three are probably not intended to be over-analyzed or dissected into different nuances, but are to be taken together to say with every part of your person, your whole self all your capacity and life is to be devoted to God!

*So we are to pursue a Right View of God, and pursue a Radical Love for God ...*

### **3. Pursue Real Internalization of God's Word – v. 6**

Verse 7 is going to talk about parenting and the family and what we are to teach our children, but before we get there, there's one more step that must take place – **v. 6 says these commandments must be “on your heart”**

This phrase means your inner person and whole being must be affected and transformed by God's Word before you can be an effective parent. And it starts with a right and high view of God.

I've said before I agree with Ted Tripp the most important thing you can do for your kids is to be “dazzled by God.” As parents we are giving a message to our children about God, and the non-verbal messages perhaps they pick up most. Kids do not have to be very old to be able to tell what mom and dad's attitude is in their home and heart about this God they worship, and what their real focus is.

Think about whether you communicate to your kids non-verbally by your actions and attitudes whether church is a priority and joy and is central for mom and dad to be with God's people and be able to worship the massive and magnificent God together as a monumental privilege. What are you doing or saying or communicating to your kids about what God and His people are to you? Do you expect your kids to be in love with God and want to be here, when you give the impression you don't? God help us.

If mom or dad acts like the Bible or preaching is boring, don't be surprised if your kids do, too. If church is a drudgery to you by your body-language, your kids will pick up on that. Kids tend to emulate their parents and what they do or say, for better or worse.

I remember watching a 2-year-old daughter of ours one time (I don't think she knew I was watching) and she was disciplining one of her dolls and instructing her doll that she needed to obey and have a happy heart. And then when she finished spanking her doll, she prayed with her as we do, but with a little different prayer: "Thank you God for this food, in Jesus' name, Amen."

As we see our kids pick up little things as they're little it can be humorous at times, and at other times it can be sobering. It's not only in the mundane everyday things of life, but the major events, they're watching us and what we do and say and how.

Whether in simple prayers with a toddler or discipline of a ten year-old or admonition with a teenager we want them to see that the Lord is our focus. When it comes to the things of God they will soon learn where our priorities and loves really are in our heart, what's most important to us. God and His glory are more important than your family and your kids, so the family should be an altar to God above all. There's many well-meaning parents who want to show love to their kids and develop them in every way (academically, athletically, etc.) and they can become a child-centered home, where the kids and their activities and programs and preferences become more important than the church and God, practically speaking, at least that's the message the kids may get

In centuries past, Christians understood the importance of God being the center of their home and family worship. They believed the very nature and moral fiber of society depend on what children have picked up – or have failed to pick up – in the home.

The Puritans knew that the church can never be a substitute for the religious life of a family. In fact, the health of the church depends much on what happens *in the home* from Monday-Saturday. A lot of people today think the strength of a Christian family and kids depends on the church. Our spiritual forefathers saw it just the other way: the strength of the church depends on the family. And no parent or family or individual can live or rise above their view of God. If God is not the weighty, all-glorious, all-sufficient, all-consuming center of our lives, we will fail in this task of parenting, marriage, or the home. May God grow bigger in our hearts and may He write His commands more deeply there as this verse says, so we who are parents and who work with kids here can seek to fulfill the rest of this passage for God's glory and our good.

#### 4. Pursue Regular Teaching and Living it in the home, v. 7-9

According to Jesus, verses 4-5 are the great and foremost commandment, but we might also say that the rest of this passage has the greatest and foremost commandment for biblical parenting.

**Dt 6:7** *You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up.*

Nowhere does the Bible say the responsibility of teaching your children biblical truth is the church's job. It's not the responsibility of Sunday school to raise your kids in God's truth, it's not Christian school, it's not programs, it's not AWANA, it's not Hume Lake, it's not Christian videos (singing and talking vegetables won't make your children godly). Many parents think their duty is fulfilled by driving the car to drop their kids off at church and that good kids will be produced – their ministry is a “bus ministry” to get their kids here. If you are a parent here today it is YOUR responsibility before God to teach your children about God constantly. Show me a Bible verse that puts that responsibility elsewhere, I invite you to prove me wrong. That's not to say we as a church cannot supplement and support parents, but we cannot be a substitute for you teaching them God's truth. *Turn to Eph. 6.*

None of those other people are with your children when you sit at home, walk with your family, put them to bed, get them up in the morning – God has specifically designed and ordained you to “teach them diligently” in all those settings, and if you refuse to take seriously your responsibility to train and raise your kids in God's ways, you are in sin and a dereliction of duty.

This is convicting to me, and sobering to me, but the Bible does place the responsibility especially on the man of the home.

Ephesians 6:4 (NASB95) <sup>4</sup> **Fathers**, do not provoke your children to anger, but **bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**

For much of ancient times, the father worked hard full days for 6 days a week, and was very busy, and the mom was around the children more, but God addresses the fathers in the NT parenting passages as the responsible one to instruct them in the Lord.

This verse doesn't say "parents," it says "fathers." Paul used a different Greek word for "parents" in v. 1 and "father *and mother*" in v. 2. His use of the specific word "father" is intentionally singling out and addressing dads as the primary spiritually responsible ones, as the head of the home, the ones with lion share of this task of spiritual child-rearing. The Colossians parallel also singles out fathers in parenting instructions.

The responsibility of training up children in the Lord is NOT for mothers primarily, although of course they can help -- the primary responsibility is on us men. The sobering truth is that God is going to hold us accountable for how we raised our children.

Listen to Psalm 78:5 – God "established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which *he commanded our fathers to teach to their children*"

Prov. 4:1 "Hear O son, a father's instruction"

While this responsibility is heavier on the mans' shoulders, both parents are involved:

Prov. 1:8 and 6:20 "My son, keep your father's commandment and forsake not your mother's teaching"  
Deut. 6 does not limit mothers from this process

The importance of biblical education and training is emphasized as clearly as anywhere here in Deuteronomy 6:7. I have read some books that use this passage as a proof-text for why Christian schools are the only way to go. We are certainly thankful to have a great Christian school here on campus, but this passage is not about school-time primarily, this is about other times through the normal course of the day or week, when dad is home from work and is talking to his children about the things of God in the milieu of life, when they go to bed, or wake up, or when mom or dad drives them in the car along the way or when the family is sitting together at the dinner table or whenever you can talk.

Parents can fulfill this mandate at home no matter what type of school (public, private, home, charter, etc.). None of us do it exactly the same as the original readers of this passage did, and whatever you decide for your children in regards to schooling, the principles of this passage apply to you in your home.

Some of you parents have strong convictions about how you want to school your own children, but don't assume that the way you do it is the only way to obey this passage and don't look down on others who make different schooling choices or assume they're not. There is more than one way to apply a biblical principle, but what's non-negotiable is that discipleship of our kids is OUR duty.

v. 7 says "TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY"

This is one word in the original language, which has the idea of impressing something deeply on someone. The word is usually translated as "sharpened" like God sharpening His sword in Dt 32

Jay Adams summarizes the word this way:

The word ... means to "say something twice" (it is related to the number two). Then, it comes to mean "say it again" or "repeat." It is used of sharpening a sword because in the whetting process the blade is *repeatedly* struck or rubbed against the honing stone ... The second factor in the word moves ... to the idea of applying truth to situation after situation to which it corresponds. Surely, one must learn the truth, but repeatedly he must show its application to everyday, real life circumstances. Truth must be integrated with life. (cited by Priolo, *Teach Them Diligently*, 14).

**"when you sit in your house"** – includes formal times - Family devotions, family worship, perhaps after a meal or at set times. I am thankful to my parents that our family had a priority of this. I shared in our evening series that I've read about colonial America and centuries past in England, it's said that men who were not regularly leading their family in family worship / devotions could frequently come under the rebuke of the Elders and church discipline, at least to the point of those dads not being allowed to take of communion at church. They took it seriously, not lightly.

Family worship = worship or devotions as a family together (usually involving Scripture or songs or both, in some backgrounds there's more formal training like a catechism or study, but it can be more informal). For us at our young kids age, it's usually as simple as reading some Bible passages or stories (books with pictures), singing songs, praying, and making it fun and interactive for the kids, acting out the story. It will look differently for others, but kids will pick up whether God's Word is a priority for mom & dad.

**“when you walk by the way”** – includes informal times. It is good to have walks and talks with your family. I remember going for walks and hikes with my dad, and we would enjoy the beautiful nature and trees and often the best theological conversations we would have about creation and questions I had took place when we were going for walks. For many of us, the principle behind this verse would apply when you are driving in your van –those can e good times for spiritual interaction and instruction.

**“when you lie down”** – what a great way to bring a day to close, to pray with your children, or sing a song with them, or read Bible.

**“when you rise up”** – early in the morning is also another opportunity to have spiritual input for yourself and your family. I remember times when our dad would take us kids one-on-one out to breakfast and have spiritual talks and it was really great and special to have time with dad like that just one-on-one.

The point of all this is not that you need to have four catechism appointments every day with your kids – you put those phrases together and it obviously means everywhere and every circumstance and every time can be an opportunity to shepherd the hearts of your children.

Those of you who are parents have the responsibility and the privilege to discuss the relevance of Scripture not just *to* all of life’s situations, but *while* you and they are actually in the midst of those life situations. This can often be the most effective time to teach when everyday things are fresh in the mind and the truth and its relevance is brought to bear.

Lou Priolo has an excellent book that develops this further called *Teach Them Diligently: How to Use the Scriptures in Child Training*. He illustrates this with the story of Helen Keller:

‘As a child, she had the most difficult time learning much of anything. It wasn’t until Annie Sullivan employed a milieu teaching device that her whole attitude and desire for learning radically changed. One day, after Helen threw a tantrum over her inability to understand a lesson, she and Anne were walking in the country and came upon a well-house. In her autobiography, Helen recorded what happened next on this most momentous day of her life.

Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled onto the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten – a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! ... I left the well-house eager to learn.

... she understood for the first time that what her mentor was trying to teach her had to do with *life*. When she realized that the truth she was learning on one hand had to do with the things she was experiencing on the other hand, she became excited. Young Helen Keller’s life was changed because she saw the relevancy of what she was learning to what she was experiencing (p. 22-23).

**Dt 6:8** “*You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.*”

By NT times, the Pharisees had taken this literally to the nth degree by elaborately binding copies of the Scripture to their hand and making phylacteries (little boxes with this text) that they would put on their forehead. Jesus rebuked them for making wide phylacteries to impress others – to the Lord they were acting like block-heads. The original intent was mainly metaphorical - children need to learn that Scriptures should govern all behavior.

Hand = actions

Forehead = thoughts

**Dt 6:9** “*You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*”

We used to live in a Jewish part of the San Fernando Valley, and even the Jews who were not that religious also took this literally by having little boxes, called *mezuzah*’s, on their doorways.

There’s certainly nothing wrong with literally putting Bible verses up around your house or your cubicle at work, or on your mirror in your bathroom or somewhere to help you memorize it.

But the idea of this I think is summed up well by Tripp when he says: “A distinctly Christian culture of thought and interaction is to pervade family life in such a profound way that even the way that the home is decorated and appointed speaks of the glory and goodness and greatness of God.”

- The “doorposts of the house” indicate that whether you are going out the door or coming home from other activities, God’s word has relevance to everything you do.
- When he says “on your gates” he may have in mind the fact that gates in those days were where important business decisions and transactions took place, implying that the scripture must be applied to social matters and business decisions
- Or it could be the idea that the Bible must be applied not only when you are around your family and friends but also when you are out of town. *Everywhere* and in *all circumstances* the Scriptures are to be applied to life! (Priolo, 16-17)

May God help us to pursue a:

Right View of God

Radical Love for God

Real Internalization of God’s Word

Regular Teaching and Living it in the Home