

Foundations of a Godly Home

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[0 : 00] I invite you to take your Bibles this morning and turn with me over to the book of Deuteronomy. We're going to be in Deuteronomy chapter 6 this morning, beginning in verse 4, and we're going to work our way through verse 9.

Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 through 9. And this morning, I'd like to talk to you about something that is very near and dear to my heart.

This is also the passage that I go to when people ask me, why are you still doing youth ministry? You're almost 40 years old. You should be aging out of youth ministry by now, right, Mike?

This is the foundational text for youth ministry, children's ministry, when it comes to family discipleship that we find in the Bible. And so this is a very important text that we'll be going over this morning when we're talking about foundations for a godly home.

I think if I was to ask everyone in this room this morning, is raising children, raising them in a godly home, raising youth in a godly home, is that a good thing? Is it important?

[1 : 06] I think it's pretty safe to say that most everyone in this room would say, yes, raising a child in a godly home is a good idea. But if I was to go around and ask each person, how do we go about doing that?

What are some ways that we can raise our children in a godly home? I'm sure we would get a number of different answers. And so this morning, what we do not want to concern ourselves with is the opinion of other people, not even my opinion.

What we want to concern ourselves with this morning is, what does God say? What does God say about the key foundations to a godly home?

And Deuteronomy 6, verses 4 through 9, has some key foundations for us that we can take away and apply to our family life. I trust that you have found our text.

I'm going to invite everyone to stand as we honor the reading of God's holy, inerrant, infallible word. Moses says, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

[2 : 18] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, 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.

Would you pray with me? Father, this is your word, and this morning we are thankful to come here to study. Lord, we are thankful that, Lord, you have given parents the responsibility to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

And so, Father, this morning as we come, Lord, I pray that you would open our hearts, our ears, our minds to be receptive, to be teachable.

So, Lord, we dedicate this time to you first of all, and we praise you for it in Christ's name. Amen. Thank you. You can be seated. You know, I am always overwhelmed, as is many children's pastors, youth pastors, college pastors, people who volunteer in youth ministry, children's ministries.

[3 : 38] I am always overwhelmed by the statistics of students that drop out of the church early on in life.

Now, when I say students, I am not referring to juniors and seniors in high school who typically we see their attendance decline a little bit due to a driver's license, a girl or a boy, a combination of those two, and even a job.

The statistics I am looking at this morning has to do with students between the ages of 18 to 22 years old. According to a recent LifeWay survey that I have read, 70% of students between the ages of 18 to 22 years old will walk away from the church, some of whom will never come back.

70%, that's 7 out of 10. Let me put that into a little bit of a perspective for us. In a youth ministry the size of ours here at First Baptist, which can go anywhere from 35 to 40 roughly, 28 will not remain faithful.

28 of our students, according to these statistics, will walk away from the church between the ages of 18 to 22 years old, and some will not return. And so what we have on our hands is an epidemic, an epidemic that deserves an answer, but more importantly, an epidemic that deserves a cure.

[5 : 10] What are some things that we as a church family can do to help deter this cancer that is eating away at our young people? Well, according to this survey that I just referenced, there are four things that a church can do to help foster a vibrant relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Number one, according to this survey, the church must have a proven value. Listen to what this survey reports. It says that two-thirds of the teens that stayed in the church said this, the church plays a vital part of my relationship with God.

Mom and Dad, I want you to hear that. The church, these teenagers that stayed between the ages of 18 and 22, said that the church plays a vital part in their relationship with God.

What this demonstrates to us is that a relationship with God and regular church attendance is of the utmost importance.

And I would add church attendance to the church that they are members at. Second, according to this survey, the church must have relevant teaching, preaching, and worship.

[6 : 31] Once again, the students that stayed in the church, according to this survey, said that when the Bible was presented in relevant ways and the music met them where they were at in life, this helped to promote faithfulness.

At the time this survey was done, Scott McConnell, director of research at LifeWay, said this, quote, if teens can't relate to the sermons at their church or don't enjoy the worship style, then as young adults, they can easily fall away from their only connection to the church.

The third thing that kept these students in the church, according to this survey, were adults. Adults that invested their lives into theirs.

This helped to promote faithfulness. This survey reported that at least one adult had invested their lives into those students who stayed in the church.

A few months ago, parents, you'll remember that I sent you an email asking for parents and adults to be involved with us on Wednesday nights. This is the reason.

[7 : 40] Because our students need adults investing their lives into theirs. And in this survey, the adults that they were referring to were not the youth pastors.

It was very, very few youth pastors. It was very few people in full-time vocational ministry. This was people like their Sunday school teachers. This was people like those who come on Wednesday nights to hang out with our students, to eat a meal with them, and just talk with them.

Adults investing their lives into students are important. However, the one thing that was the most important, according to this survey, and I'm not trying to blow my head up here, but I have read a lot of books on youth ministry.

I mean, a lot. Children's ministry, youth ministry, family ministry, and read a lot of surveys and been working with students for around 15 years. Across the board, the number one thing that kept students in the church were mom and dad.

Here's what this survey reported. It said, quote, teens who at age 17 that have parents that are authentic examples of the Christian faith, that is, they are proactive and consistent in living out their faith, also are more likely to keep attending as young adults.

[9 : 00] Across the board, 20% more of those who stayed indicated that they had parents or family members who discussed spiritual things, gave them spiritual guidance, and prayed with them.

And so just from the external data, these books that we have on family ministry over the last 25 years, these surveys that are taken year after year after year across the board, the number one element that kept these students in the church were faithful parents.

That's what the external data points to. And it's funny because that's what the internal data says as well. Parents must make God the center of their home.

And our children, our young people, our youth, they need to be seeing that. And so the million dollar question this morning is, how do we do that? How do we make God the center of our home?

This text here, Deuteronomy 6, 4 through 9, is going to give us three ways that we, as parents, can make God the center of our home. Number one, to make God the center of the home, parents must have an uncompromising love for the Lord.

[10 : 19] Parents must have an uncompromising love for the Lord. Look what verse 4 says. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Now this great passage that we are going over this morning, Deuteronomy 6, 4 through 9, is what we call the Shema. Okay? And the word Shema is a Hebrew word that means to hear.

That's the first word here in verse 4. Okay? Also, post-biblical rabbis understood the role of the Shema to be at the very heart of God's law.

If you remember correctly, when Jesus was asked by his critics, what is the most important of all of the commandments, he quotes the Shema and its companion passage, Leviticus 19:18.

This was one of the fundamental tenets of the Jewish faith. And you know what? Jesus' critics obviously agreed with him. And so verse 4 goes on to say that the Lord is one.

[11 : 21] Perhaps the biggest precept in Judaism and in Christianity for that matter is the concept of what we call monotheism, the belief that there is only one God.

Now, if you have the privilege of working with children or even youth and explaining to them that God is one but yet he exists in three distinct eternal persons, a lot of times that will raise a lot of questions and trying to explain that God is one but yet three persons can be a task.

I love the way John MacArthur explains this. Listen to what he says. He says, quote, one in this passage does not mean singleness but unity.

It is the same word used in Genesis 2:24 where the husband and wife were said to be one flesh. And so you have the husband and wife as two individuals coming together as one flesh in marriage.

We also have to take into consideration the context of our passage this morning. The Israelites are moving into a new land, a land that's inhabited by pagans who worship multiple gods.

[12 : 30] And so God here says you are not to worship those false gods. You are to worship the one true God, Yahweh is my name, the God that you have entered into a covenant relationship with.

And so this text says that we are to worship this God who is one and we are to love him, verse five, with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our might.

Heart, soul, might. This does not describe three distinct natures to a human being's existence.

Rather, it is explaining to us that everything that we are is to be completely sold out to the Lord. In other words, parents, every aspect of our lives, our recreation life, our professional life, our family life, needs to be sold out to him.

God must be at the center of everything we do and our kids have to see that. Our kids have to see us loving God with an uncompromising love.

[13 : 47] Let me illustrate it using a parable. There was a guy in the New Testament that used parables for illustrations and it worked really well for him, so I'm going to do it. Sally loved her husband, Joe.

Sally and Joe have been married for roughly seven years and Sally adored Joe. She loved him with all of her heart, with all of her soul, with all of her might.

She would call him throughout the day and send him little text messages just to remind him how much she loved him and looked forward to seeing him when he came home. If Joe was having a hard day at work and was a little stressed out, if she could help, she would drop everything she could to be right by his side, to help him to be there with him.

She loved him and she did everything she could for him. She even gave Joe a son. They named him Joe Jr. Now, Joe Sr., the husband, he had a different concept, a different kind of idea of what love meant.

Joe would commonly forget her birthday. He would often forget their anniversary. He would regularly go to the lake to go fishing and go hunting and he would go to the Clemson football game no matter what.

[15 : 02] Even if it was a day they had designated as date day, he was going to the game. And so, when Sally asked him, why do you do that? Why do you go to the game or go hunting and fishing on the days that we've got someone watching the kids and we can go out and have a date?

And Joe would just kind of blow her off and say, you know what? No big deal. We'll just go next week. And then next week would come and it would go and so forth. Despite the neglect, Sally never gave up on their relationship.

She continued to love him. As the years went by, Joe Jr., their son, saw how daddy treated mommy. And Joe Jr. grew up thinking that's how you treat your wife.

And so, when he got married and he had a kid, Joe III, Joe III, watched how Joe Jr. treated his wife and he saw how his granddaddy treated his grandmother.

What we see in this little parable is a downward spiral of apathy and despondency from one generation to the next.

[16 : 15] And it's illustrative of what can happen when parents fail to love God with an uncompromising kind of love that our children can see.

If our kids see in us a love for the Lord that expresses itself in apathy, in despondency, well, there's a good chance that they'll follow suit.

However, if they see a sincere love, a uncompromising love for God that puts God first in every single area of their lives, there's also a good chance that they'll follow that as well and not become the next statistic.

To make God the center of the home, we, the parents, must have an uncompromising love for God. Number two, to make God the center of the home, parents must model biblical obedience.

Parents must model biblical obedience. Look what Moses says, verse six. He says, and these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

[17 : 22] I want to look at three words here in verse six. It's the words words, command, and heart. The word words is the subject of the sentence and it's a reference to scripture.

Okay? The word command is obviously the verb and it can be translated as to give in order or to lay charge of. In other words, God's word, scripture, is a command, a charge that demands absolute obedience from the Christian and the Christian's home.

And this brings us to the next word, which is the word heart, which can also be translated as inner mind or will. Now, in the psychology of the Old Testament, the heart is not the center of emotional life and response.

Here in the United States, when we think of the word heart, we kind of get that ushy-gushy kind of thinking of love or something being on our heart. That's not what it means in the Old Testament. The heart in the Old Testament is the seat of intellect or the rational side of humankind.

In other words, for something to be upon the heart means that it is in a person's constant, conscious reflection. And so as the Israelites went throughout their day, Moses is commanding them to ponder and to meditate upon the word of God.

[18 : 49] They were to be so saturated with God's word that their obedience to the word of God naturally comes as an outflow of their love for Him. Once again, John MacArthur puts it this way.

He says, quote, the people were to think about these commandments and meditate on them so that obedience would not be a matter of formal legalism but a response based upon understanding.

I brought a magazine article with me this morning. It's a fairly old magazine article. It comes from a magazine called Parent Magazine. And this article was written by a man named Dr. Benjamin Spock.

I'm sure a number of you in here have heard his name who during his lifetime was considered the leading pediatrician in the medical community. He wrote a book called Baby and Child Care.

This book sold more than 50 million copies second only to the Bible. And in this article he writes about something that he calls incidental learning which is the kind of learning that takes place when a child watches a mom, a dad, a teacher, even a peer.

[20 : 05] So hear what he says in this article. He says that children learn a great deal from a formal education but they also are educated by identifying with and imitating their parents which he goes on to explain is called incidental learning.

He says that children develop the basic survival tools they need long before they enter the world of formal schooling. Incidental learning takes place throughout a child's life but a child's first teacher are his parents and they are his most profound inspiration.

Examples of incidental learning includes a two-year-old who picks up several new words each day by listening to his parents and a toddler who takes his first steps after he experiments by holding on to his parents.

A child, as a child becomes older and encounters new people and environments they begin to imitate the behaviors of people other than their parents. In preschool or elementary school they may pay attention to the behaviors of friends or older children at least in superficial matters such as their manners, their language and their fashion.

Other admired adults they may imitate include daycare providers, teachers or camp counselors. And during the preteen and teen years children identify more strongly with the beliefs and the behaviors of their peers.

[21 : 28] Young children usually identify more closely with the parent of the same gender. They absorb crucial lessons about social and moral behavior by studying that parent.

Children between the ages of four to six are usually eager to observe adults at work. Many children spend numerous hours playing house and what they're really doing in these activities is acting out the roles of their parents.

Boys may pretend to say goodbye to their wife and girls likewise to their husbands. By the age of three and four children delight in cooking, driving and playing house just like mommy and daddy.

This is for the school teachers. Incidental learning at home also influences how a child will perform in school. For example, the best way to instill a love of books in children is to read to them and for them to see their parents enjoying books.

He sums up his article by saying this. If parents want their child's incidental learning to be as beneficial as possible, then parents should demonstrate as often as possible the qualities they want their child to imitate.

[22 : 43] I think we as Christian parents want to be setting the best biblical example possible.

And I know we fail at times. I know I fail often. But we have to be doing it because when our children do not see us walking closely with the Lord, that's a big problem.

If they don't see us spending time with God every day, if they don't see us praying, if they don't see us getting into the Bible, having our devotional quiet time, whatever you want to call it, if they don't see us doing it, chances are they're not going to do it.

If our children see in us a love or a lack thereof of the church and placing other things before it, chances are our children will do the same.

if our children do not see us placing a priority on corporate worship, on coming to Sunday school, being involved in some discipleship, chances are our children will not either.

[23 : 55] The bottom line is this. Our children are watching us. They're going to imitate what we do. Let us instill into our children biblical obedience.

Biblical obedience. To make God the center of the home, parents must model biblical obedience. And finally, to make God the center of the home, parents must teach God's Word to their kids.

Parents, you are the primary disciples of your children. Not your pastor, not their Sunday school teacher. You are the ones primarily responsible throughout the week to open up this book and to teach them.

Look what Moses says next in verse 7. He says, you shall teach them, that is scripture, diligently to your children and shall talk of them, that is scripture, when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise.

This word, teach, is a very interesting word. It can actually be translated pierced or to sharpen. If you're using the NIV translation, it uses the word impress, I-M-P-R-E-S-S.

[25 : 09] And so it's the image of an engraver who is carefully and meticulously taking a piece of granite and hammering at it to make a beautiful piece of artwork.

He only imagined how meticulous that is and how long of a process that is. But that's what it's like teaching our children the Bible.

It's a long process. It can be meticulous at times. It can even be difficult. But it pays dividends in the end.

We just don't teach our children the scripture. Moses says here that we are to talk about scripture with them. There's a difference between teaching our children scripture and talking to them about it.

It is our responsibility to not only open this book and teach them but also talk. The difference is that talking denotes a constant repetition to aid with memory.

[26 : 12] Okay? So this is the conversation you're having around the dinner table at night. This might be the conversation you have on the way home from church this afternoon when you ask your child what was it that you all learned in Sunday school today?

This can be a conversation you have on the way to the ball game. Any conversation as we're sitting around the house scripture has to be a topic of discussion.

It should be a primary topic of discussion. And when we do that it helps to impress into the minds of our children what they've been taught at the church and what we're teaching them in God's word.

And so Moses closes out this section in verses 8 and 9 he says you shall bind them that is scripture once again as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes you shall write them that is scripture on the doorpost of your house and on your gates.

What in the world does it mean to take scripture and bind it to my hands and put it on my forehead and on the doorpost of my house? What is he talking about? Well when this was originally written there was a degree of symbolism here however later on teachers of the law began to take this passage extremely literal.

[27 : 27] they would take these boxes that they would make called phylacteries and they would take in these boxes called phylacteries and they would take the Shema this passage we're looking at and they would put it inside of it and then they would take that box those boxes and put them on their gowns and on their headdresses they would even put them to the doorpost of their house.

There is a degree of symbolism in here I believe and what Moses I believe is saying is that the word of God should be so prevalent in your life and in your family's life remember he's writing to parents that it should be a constant guide to how you live and how your family lives.

Before her death Morrow Coffey Graham wrote a book she wrote this book about her experiences as the mother of a man who would go on to preach the gospel to more than any other person in modern history.

I brought a little excerpt of her book with me and in closing this morning I'd like to read it to you. Here's what she says My husband and I established a family altar the day we were married and we carried that through.

In the breakfast room I always kept a scripture calendar with a verse for the day. Each morning we read that and prayed to the Lord and as we gathered at the breakfast table everyone would bow his head and fold his hands as my husband asked the blessing.

[28 : 57] Often as I packed the school lunches I could hear my husband talking to the children. He helped them memorize literally hundreds of Bible verses. I look forward to our evenings together as a family.

Everyone gathered in the family room and we did this right after the dinner dishes were put away. It was the most important things in our life this time of Bible reading and prayer and listen to what she says.

I know that today Billy recalls those instructional periods as among the most important in his life helping him to become saturated with the Bible and since my children have married and gone their separate ways and since my husband's death I have found myself with more time to devote to prayer and I pray unceasing for Billy.

As many of you all in this room probably have already guessed that the Billy she's referring to here is Billy Graham. And one of the reasons Billy Graham was so great is because he had parents that faithfully taught him the Word of God in his home and in his life and because of this this is one of the reasons Billy grew up practicing what he was taught by a faithful mom and dad.

What a responsibility we as parents have to raise our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord to disciple them.

[30 : 26] I don't think anyone in this room this morning is happy with the moral decay that our nation is going through right now. We need a generation of young people who love Jesus with all their heart soul and might that are serious about making disciples that are like the eleven remaining disciples in Acts chapter 2 who turn this world upside down for Jesus.

It starts with us. The buck stops with you mom and dad. So let us be diligent in discipling our children.

You know I've read this book as many of you guys have I've read this book front to back many many times. I have yet to find an exception clause to raising our kids to discipling our children.

I have yet to find a passage of scripture in there where raising our kids and the fear and admonition of the Lord is something we can delegate to a professional like a youth pastor or senior pastor or somebody else.

It's just not there. We are called to be the primary disciples of our children and the question is are we doing it?

[31 : 52] So this morning as we enter into a time of invitation maybe you need to spend some time as do I in prayer asking God to help you with that asking God to show you ways that you can take that responsibility and be a champion with it.

Maybe you need to spend some time here at the altar maybe you've been visiting with us for several weeks and you know you're thinking of joining our church however the Lord is working in your life during this time of invitation let God have his way so I'm going to pray for us our musicians will come and lead us and you just let the Lord have his way in your life this morning would you pray with me Father we come before you today thankful for the word of God Father it is your word it is without error and it has complete authority over our lives the things we like and the things we do not like it has complete and absolute authority and so Father this morning we come and pray that Lord you would take your word and work in us that for every person that is here that has children or even couples that are looking to have children that Lord we would do our very best to model biblical obedience to love you with an uncompromising love to teach our children your word may we be caught faithful doing that each and every day

Lord we love you and we pray this in Jesus name amen god