

Father's Day

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[0 : 00] Would you open your Bibles, please, to Deuteronomy, chapter 6. We will look far and wide to find a clearer or more succinct expression of the family and the fatherhood in what we find right here in Deuteronomy, chapter 6.

And I should like to begin reading with verse 1. And we will read down through verse 9. Reading from the New American Standard translation. Please follow along with whatever translation you may be using. Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments, which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.

O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

[1 : 45] And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart, and 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.

And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead, and you shall write them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates.

Now, before we begin examining the text in any detail, I do have some opening remarks that I would like to get on the table before we turn to the text.

And I want to remind you that connection with what we just read from Deuteronomy, we have here a new nation, Israel, with a new beginning in a new land.

Really, it is an old land, but it was a land that was unknown to the present generation to which Moses was speaking. And when I say it was an old land, I mean it was a land that was promised to Abraham the patriarch more than 400 years prior to the time Moses was giving these directives to the children of Israel.

[3 : 10] You see, God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, which is, by the way, modern-day southern Iraq, called him to go north up to Haran, and then over and then down into the land of Israel, also referred to then as the land of Canaan.

And God said to Abraham, I am going to give this land to you and to your descendants for an everlasting possession. Well, we know that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived there for several years, begat several children, raised huge herds, became very wealthy by the world's standards then, until the time came that there was a famine in the land and they went down into Egypt seeking grain, and you all recall the story about Joseph and his brothers, etc.

At any rate, Jacob and all of his family, consisting of 70 souls, went down to the land of Egypt because Pharaoh had promised them real estate there, and they were there for 400 years, but eventually that Pharaoh died off and other Pharaohs rose up who had no respect or memory for Joseph and the fact that he was the salvation of the nation of Egypt, and they began persecuting and placing the children of Israel in bondage.

And by this time, they had been multiplying for 400 years, and there were about 2 million of them. And God said through the man Moses, you've been here long enough, you've been slaves long enough, it's time to go home.

And you're going home to the old land that I promised to your grandfathers. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So, of course, they'd never been there before.

[5 : 05] Moses had never been there before. Moses would never see the land except God would, in his grace, allow him to be in the land after death when he appeared along with Elijah, the Mount of Transfiguration.

Moses was there. So this is all new to the children of Israel. And here are the divine guidelines for a new society, for its being conducted in an orderly fashion so as to maximize all the potential and the benefits provided by it.

And I want you to understand something about the law of Moses, well, many other things as well, but a very principal thing that I've discovered that even most Christians have completely lost sight of, and that is this.

The laws that God gave to the children of Israel through Moses were never intended to be merely restrictive or mandatory or to no purpose.

It was never an intention of just do as I tell you, shut up and don't ask questions. It was never given like that. All of the laws that God gave to his covenant people were designed for their benefit, for their blessing.

[6 : 15] They were not burdens. They were not restrictions. They were not just a bunch of do's and don'ts. That's what people usually reduce the law of Moses to. But it was a very beneficent thing from the beginning.

It was really a case of, I'm telling you this for your own good. And there isn't a parent anywhere who hasn't told that to their child. And there probably isn't a child anywhere who ever believed it.

But the parent really meant it with all their heart. And when God gave these directives to Israel, he really meant it. And he said, I'm telling you this so that when you go into the land, you will prosper. And your days will be long. The implication is that if you disregard these things and dismiss them, it's going to have an effect of even shortening your lifespan.

And it will add chaos to your society. So what he is giving them is for their benefit. Now, you've got a new land, a new nation, a new beginning.

[7 : 23] Where does one begin? The Israelites wouldn't have a clue. So God informs them as to how it as a nation is to go about it and what the starting point is.

It begins where God began the beginning. In the beginning. It begins with the family. Mother, father, children. This is Genesis early on.

True, these are commandments and provisions that God made for the Jewish family exclusively. As regards details provided here in Deuteronomy 6, these were never intended for households or nations worldwide, including the U.S. of A.

That, too, is a major confusion among Christians. They think we ought to be living according to the Mosaic law. We're not supposed to be. We were never given the Mosaic law.

No one was ever given the law of Moses except the Jewish people, the nation of Israel. We, who are believers, have a different law under which we are to live and function.

[8 : 41] And it is that found in Romans 8 where Paul says the law of liberty in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death. We are under the law of love and it operates with an entirely different mode than what the Mosaic law does.

So, when Paul says we are not under law but under grace, that was true for the Jew to whom he wrote that at that time. But the Gentile, the non-Jew, never was under the law.

The only law we were under, that is the law of Moses, we were under and still are under the law of God written in our hearts as human beings and everyone throughout the world has that law.

It is the innate knowledge that there is a God. And this is borne out in Romans chapter 1. So, now consider, if you will, even though these laws that are given here in Deuteronomy 6 were never intended for non-Jewish people or for households or even for nations worldwide, yet, there are undeniable abiding principles that all nations would do well to emulate.

Abiding principles are those elements of divine wisdom that are abiding, remaining.

[10 : 12] They are always in force. They are pearls of divine wisdom. You either employ them to your benefit or you ignore them to your peril.

Right now, as I speak, the United States of America is engaged in a robust plan for ignoring them. And we are paying a very heavy price on a day-to-day basis.

These dictates that God gave to Israel upon entering the land contain identifiable elements that will guide and bless all of mankind in their implementation.

Today, not only in the USA, but in most of the world at large, including Israel, the family unit is in disarray.

But in the United States, it is painfully disintegrating before our very eyes. We are in the midst of a cultural, societal upheaval never before seen since the birthday of our nation in 1776.

[11 : 36] And it all stems from the abandonment of moral absolutes and their replacement with moral relativism. The watchword today is, who's to say what's right and wrong anymore?

Only the individual has the right and only the individual possesses his own moral authority for the determination of right and wrong.

Each becomes his own moral authority. Who else but the individual has the right to say abortion is right or wrong? That marriage is even necessary?

That only one man should marry only one woman? That divorce is right or wrong? That euthanasia is right or wrong? Do you not see these are all keenly and pointedly about the family?

All of these issues directly involve and impinge upon the family unit wherever they are applied. All of these issues.

[12 : 48] And this is what people are saying today. And I want to stop here and inject something because this issue came up in our Sunday school class. I hope when you listen to these things you listen with both ears and not with one ear thinking one thing and your mind wandering about what's going on for dinner because if you do you'll hear something like this.

Gee, Marv is saying that only the individual has the right to say divorce is right or wrong or that one man should marry one woman. That's confusing.

I didn't know he believed that. I'm telling you that's what they're saying. And I'm trying to offer a rebuttal. And if you listen with both ears you'll get it.

And if you don't then you become part of the problem. And part of the problem in the Christian community is that we are so uninformed.

So uninformed we wouldn't think of missing a night of dancing with the stars. This is where our country is.

[13 : 58] Pathetic. these are all about the family.

You can't involve the family anymore than is possible talking about abortion. That's as family as you can get.

It is either adding to a family or denying the addition to a family. If it is indeed a family that even exists but if it's a family and if it doesn't exist as a family and it's just recreational sex and she happens to get pregnant that's a family issue.

You see what we are all about is families. As families go so goes the nation.

The families are the nation. Each family of mother father and children are nothing more than a miniature composite of the nation.

[15 : 10] And the head? The fountain head of the family from which moral direction flows is the father.

It's you dad. You are the one specific individual whom God has singly raised up to be in that position.

And you are the only one who can fulfill it. If the father is not in working order, the family is severely impaired, if not actually in disintegration.

There are, thank God, strong and wise mothers daughters who can do it alone. And they have done it alone. But single parenthood is an extremely daunting task.

And there aren't very many women out there, like the mother of Dr. Ben Carson. May her tribe increase, but she is a distinct minority. She is, in fact, a minority within a minority.

[16 : 19] All too often, dads are gone, or if present, not present for duty.

There is no greater responsibility a man can have than to father children and to be a working model of a father to his children.

And there is no greater gift a father can give to his wife than to be the father to her children that the children need him to be.

Her heart is first for her husband, and then for her children. It's all a package that cannot be improved upon. In loving his wife and fathering his children, the dad is the moral authority.

But dads do not concoct this authority on our own. We are under authority ourselves, and we use what God has delegated to him, to us, to guide and direct our wives and our children.

[17 : 27] Too many dads are AWOL, absent without leave. You know, that was a really serious thing. Remember when I was in the military way back before the earth's crust hardened?

If you were AWOL, you were stockade material, because if you had to be back at the base at 12 o'clock midnight and sign in on Sunday night so you'd be ready for Reveille Monday morning, if you weren't there, you were automatically considered absent without leave, and that was a serious, punishable offense.

I don't know how many guys I knew lost their stripes, privates or corporals and sergeants and got busted to corporal or private just because of being AWOL. Because not performing your duty when you're there to perform it is one thing.

There's still a possibility that you might get it done if you're there, but if you're not even there, there's no way in the world you can do it. That's why I've often said that 75% of ministry is just showing up, because there's no way in the world that you can minister if you're not there.

So just showing up is worth something. Dads need to show up. Can't fulfill your duties if you're not present for duty.

[18 : 53] And a huge responsibility dads have is the dispensing of information. You know, we have for so long bought into the idea, dispensing of information.

education. Hmm. That sounds like you're talking about education, and that's what I pay taxes for. That's the school's job. No, it isn't. That's your job.

But I'm not a teacher. Oh, yes, you are. I don't know what kind of a teacher you are, but you are a teacher, because we teach while those little eyes are watching and those little ears are listening. we are teaching all the time, and we may not even know that they aren't aware, but they hear everything, and they see everything. And some of what we teach is intentional and deliberate, like at a family altar or a little get-together, but most of what we teach is actually unintended to be taught.

It's just kind of automatic. It's just in the business of life and living in a family, we are teaching all the time by the words we say, the expressions on our face, the deeds we do or don't do.

[20 : 12] Those are all communicating something to our children. So we are all teaching all the time, moms and dads. The principle of each generation is dispensing to the next generation the guiding principles that constitute the moral and spiritual glue for the family, and it is absolutely critical.

I had a thought one day that just kind of backed me up. Whoa now, wait, I just never thought of this before, but it's true, and I want to pass it on to you. The way you relate to your children, the way you rear your children, the values you instill in your children will have an enormous impact on your grandchildren.

You know that? Sure you knew that, but know it again. Know it in a little different venue. While you are rearing your kids, you're also influencing and affecting your grandkids.

That even adds an additional element of solemnity to it and importance of it, because we are passing this on to the next generation so that they can pass it on to the next generation.

So that, and you get the picture. But all it takes is for one generation to drop the ball. That's all it takes, just one. And they're often running in the wrong direction.

[21 : 48] And there's a lot of that going on, too. It takes only one generation of failure to hand off the baton to the next generation. And that will put the upcoming family into disarray.

And this is where we are today. The baton has been dropped by previous generations. And all we are reaping now is predictably what has been sown.

Why are things the way they are now? Well, it's cause and effect. It's that simple. Not rocket science. We are what we have been becoming.

We are the fruit of the seed that was sown in previous generations. It's been that way from time immemorial. That's just the law of sowing and reaping. And it works everywhere in the world.

Here, in Deuteronomy 6, if we may return to that text, please. I want you to see this all has to do with fathers imparting and dispensing information.

[22 : 57] And the information begins by identifying the moral authority and calling all to obedience to this authority.

And it begins with what could be called the motto, if you want to call it a motto, the motto of the nation of Israel. In fact, it's the motto of Judaism.

And it's called the Shema. S-H-E-M-A. The Shema. And every Jewish child is taught the Shema from the time they learn their ABCs.

Probably even before they learn their ABCs. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Every Jewish child knows that.

If not from religious conviction, then just out of tradition. Just passing it on out of tradition. So this is where it begins. It is an identification of the moral authority and calling all obedience to this authority.

[23 : 58] That's 6-4. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. That needs just a tad of elaboration. This verse, as well as many others in the scriptures, Old and New Testament, reveal to us that what the Bible calls love is not what the world calls love.

The world tends to associate love with romance and with feelings and emotions, all of which are wonderful. It would be a terribly boring world without them.

But the biblical definition of love is an act of the will. love. You love because you choose to love. That's a biblical love.

And biblical love means you do that which is in the best interests of the object of your love.

Sometimes it's something you don't want to do.

But you have to do it if you really love. There is such a huge, huge need for this today. Even in Christian families here in the United States.

[25 : 14] It's called tough love. And it's tough because it calls upon a parent to do the right thing, not the thing they want to do. The thing they want to do is roll over for their child.

The thing they want to do is write out another check to underwrite irresponsible living and lifestyles. And they just become enablers. They are underwriting and supporting an irresponsible lifestyle and they call that love.

Well, it's my flesh and blood. What else can I do? I just give and give and they take and take and they never learn anything. And all you're doing is subsidizing, enabling an irresponsible lifestyle. You'd be surprised how much this infects the Christian community. And they write the checks and they cave in and they do the favors because I love them. If you love them, don't do it. Don't do it.

[26 : 18] This is where tough love comes in. And let me make this distinction because this is a very valid one. If you have children, adult children, who are in some kind of a crisis mode because of a loss of employment, because of loss of health, because of something not of their doing, what do you do?

You do whatever it takes. You take out a second mortgage. You sacrifice. You do whatever you can do to help them make it.

If they are, what we would say, a victim of those circumstances, and I'm talking particularly of ill health, or things that are above and beyond their ability to resolve, you do whatever it takes.

But if it is a repetitive thing, and it is just an ongoing irresponsibility, you are doing them no favors by coming to the rescue and bailing them out.

It may be the best thing in the world for them to sit in jail for 30 days than for you to rush down there with \$750 and bail them out. Now, every case may be different, and I'm not offering any blanket solutions here.

[27 : 26] I'm just saying that tough love sometimes is what is needed rather than the sentimental, sloppy kind of love that some people think love is. Love is an act of the will, and it means that you do the right thing, the best thing, for the object of your love.

And that sometimes means you come to their aid, and sometimes it means you say no. But it is a love that is commanded.

You cannot command anybody to feel anything, but you can command somebody to do something, because they can do something as a response of the will, but nobody has direction, and nobody has authority over somebody else's feelings or emotions.

That's why the command is given, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul. That means if you really love God, then you do the things that are in the best interest of the object of your love.

And the object of your love is God. So, you do those things that are in His interest that please and honor Him. That's precisely what He's talking about here.

[28 : 38] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. No divided affections. the supreme maker and sustainer of the universe is the only one to whom this kind of loyalty and love is owed.

Everything else and everyone else is secondary. He is number one, and He has every right to be. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart, top of the agenda, foremost, boast, not optional, and you shall teach them diligently, not sloppily, not haphazardly, not occasionally, but diligently.

That means with real intent and purpose. You recognize the value of the content, and you love this kid so much you want to make sure he gets it.

you shall teach them to your sons, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house.

You know what that is? That's just ordinarily hangout living. That's all. That's just relating and being together in the kitchen and in the dining room and in the living room and just in normal discourse you are teaching.

[30 : 15] Intentionally or unintentionally you are communicating. When you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Is there anything here that isn't covered? I mean, this is the whole waterfront, isn't it? and you shall bind them as a sign on your head, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

What is that all about? Well, if you were a Jew, you wouldn't have any difficulty at all knowing what that's all about, especially if you were an Orthodox Jew, because the Orthodox Jew, I suspect that many of you here have seen Fiddler on the Roof.

Have you? The milkman? The Jewish milkman? He had a little tiny leather box, about an inch square, and it had a strap attached to it.

And in that little leather box was a portion of scripture written out in Hebrew. And they would take it and fold it and place it in that little box, and then take the strap that was attached to it, put the little box on their forehead, and the strap attached to it would go around their head.

[31 : 42] If you recall, Fiddler on the Roof, Tevi had one of those. And it's called the, I think it's called the Tephilim. The Tephilim.

It's the writing, or the scroll. And this was quite literally done. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand. Oh yes, he had one on his hand too, on the back of his hand with a strap around.

Now don't ask me how they worked or how he milked cows with that thing, but they had them on their hands. And then they had the things to their garments. This was what the woman in the crowd who got herself close to Jesus to touch, the scriptures say, the hem of the garment.

But it wasn't the hem of the garment. It was those things that are attached to the hem of the garment of the male Jew. And she grabbed those.

These are the phylacteries that Jesus was talking about, all related to the Jewish mode of dress. So here, these things that remind them of God and his authority were built into their lifestyle in such a way that they were never without the word of God on their person.

[32 : 55] We would probably equate that with carrying a New Testament in our shirt pocket or something, but they were very literal with this, and they did. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

And in Israel today, even if you visit houses that are not Orthodox Jew, and Orthodox are those who are much more serious about their Judaism. Most of the Jews are liberal or referred to as Reformed Jews, and the vast majority of the Reformed Jews are Jews primarily by tradition and by birth rather than by conviction.

But even in these cases, if you visit their house, you go up and knock on the door and you look right to the right of the door, sometimes on the left side, there is a little object that is about three inches long and about a half an inch wide, and it looks like a little tiny container, and it's called a mezuzah, an M-U-Z-U-Z-A-H, a mezuzah, and in it is a writing of scripture, and it is tacked right onto the doorpost of each Jewish house.

and they do that based upon this passage of scripture. Now, you will not see many Christians, if any, with mezuzahs, but that's okay, because this was never given to us anyway.

But it was given to them, and it was built into their lifestyle in such a way, and just for one reason, because we are so prone to forget.

[34 : 36] Out of sight, out of mind. So, if you take the issue and fix it in such a way that it is not out of sight, then it won't be out of mind. Read on the text.

You shall write them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates, and then, and then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land, which he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you great and splendid cities, which you did not build, and so on and so on, and houses and full of good things, which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns, which you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees, which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt out of the house of slavery.

Did these people have a tendency to forget? Oh, my, they sure did. They forgot repeatedly before they even got out of the land. They forgot the last miracle that God performed for them, and all they did was gripe about what he hadn't done for them.

These physical reminders are so that people would not forget. We have one right here. It's a communion table. You see what it says across the front of it? in remembrance of me.

Why do we do that? Because we have a tendency to forget. We all do. Husbands tend to forget things about their wives. It's called taking your wife for granted.

[36 : 14] Wives do the same thing with husbands. Children do the same thing with parents. We all have short memories when it comes to these things. We need something that will remind us.

And that's why they were to do these things. Deuteronomy 6, beginning with the Shema in verse 4, it all has to do with fathers imparting and dispensing information.

And the information begins by identifying the moral authority and calling all to obedience to this authority. The greatest contribution, the greatest contribution a father can make to his God and his nation is to hand off his children as a godly seed to the next generation.

Dad, if you do that, you could not possibly be a more successful man, regardless of your occupation, or your education, or your status in life, if you do that, you have made an enormous contribution.

Well, I am tempted to dismiss you early because it is Father's Day. I know I didn't do the same for Mother's Day, but I wasn't here Mother's Day.

[37 : 49] You're talking about the Mother's Day last year. So, anyway, I hope that you all have a wonderful Father's Day planned today for your dad. I'm looking forward to enjoying one.

Her Majesty, whom you all knew as Barbara, my first wife, understood understood that for her and Mother's Day, and for that matter any other day, restaurants were preferable.

She used to say, the way to a woman's heart is through a restaurant door. But, when it came to Father's Day, she knew better than to say, honey, what restaurant do you want to go to?

She wanted to go to the Wiseman restaurant. And, the kids would be invited in, and she would fix a sumptuous meal. I made up the menu, whatever I wanted.

I never did, however, get the pressed duck under glass that I used to tease her about. So, Marie and I were discussing this the other day, and she never fell for the pressed duck under glass either.

[39 : 17] But, we are going to have kids in, and there is nothing like a Father's Day or a Mother's Day where you have the kids together. That is the greatest treat of all, just the family gathering.

And, she was gracious enough to ask me to make up the menu. But, you know, for seven years, I had gotten out of practice doing that since Barbara's gone.

So, I said, well, I'm going to leave that entirely to your discretion. And, the house looks beautiful, and the dining room table looks beautiful, and she's got it all set.

And, the manicotti preparations looks beautiful. It's going to be Italian with all the trimmings. And, I really appreciate what you've done, sweetheart, to make this Father's Day really special today.

And, many of you will be enjoying it. And, for those of you who don't get it at home like that, eh, you can always go out to the restaurant. And, she will appreciate that.

[40 : 30] So, it's a trade-off, you know. But, the important thing is, you all just love one another, have a great time, enjoy the fellowship, enjoy the family, because relationships is what life is all about.

And, you know something? Life just doesn't have much of anything else to offer that's really worthwhile, apart from relationships.

And, God, God, our Father, was so committed to relationships that he interrupted the Trinity and sent one of the persons down here to earth for the sole purpose of repairing a broken relationship.

Isn't that something? That's the only basket that's worth putting all your eggs in, relationship and it begins with a relationship to Christ.

Pray with me, please. Father, you have just so wonderfully blessed us with wisdom from your word and you have enabled us to be here today with the physical ability to be here and the spiritual desire to be here and we are so grateful.

[41 : 48] grateful. We just marvel sometimes when we even try to contemplate wonderful things you've done for us that we do know about and it leaves us wondering what else is there out there that you've already accomplished for us and we are completely clueless about it.

You are such a loving, providing God that we just cannot contemplate your being but for what we do know and understand we are so grateful and we pray today for every dad and granddad here and for those unable to be with us that they will recognize anew and afresh before you the awesome responsibility that is ours, huge privilege that is ours, the blessing that is ours of being in a strategic place where you have assigned us.

We bless you and thank you for it and commit every father and every grandfather here today to your grace and your keeping in Christ's name. Amen.

Happy Father's Day, Dad.