

## Teach Your Children Well

What did my parents teach me?

My parents taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE:

"If you're going to kill each other, do it outside - I just finished cleaning!"

My parents taught me RELIGION:

"You better pray that will come out of the carpet."

My parents taught me about TIME TRAVEL:

"If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"

My parents taught me LOGIC:

"Because I said so, that's why."

My parents taught me FORESIGHT:

"Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."

My parents taught me IRONY:

"Just keep laughing and I'll give you something to cry about."

And my parents taught me MIND READING:

"You ought to know by now that when I say something I mean something else!"

But what my parents didn't teach me was

*The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.*

*Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise." (Deuteronomy 6:5-7)*

*So that you and your children and your children's children may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all His decrees and His commandments ... so that your days may be long. (Deuteronomy 6:2)*

In his day, Moses repeatedly warned the Israelite parents to be consciously, constantly, teaching their children loving obedience to God at every opportunity from morning until evening. Whether they were at home or away from home, the parents were to utilize every teachable moment to impress upon their children the importance of honoring these Ten Commandments and the Great Commandment, so that such attitudes would not become a matter of formal legalism, but a personal deeply held response based upon repetition with understanding.

Moses also warned the Israelites ..

*Be careful not to forget the covenant that the Lord your God made with you, ... When you have had children and children's children, and become complacent in the land, if you act corruptly by making an idol in the form of anything, thus doing what is evil in*

*the sight of the Lord your God, and provoking him to anger... you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to occupy; you will not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. (Deuteronomy 4:23-26)*

Which is what you know from Biblical history did happen to the Children of Israel and in a similar way has now happened to us as a nation. Because we have also neglected to consciously, constantly, teach our children to love God and obey the Ten Commandments, we no longer live in a God honoring land and our future is uncertain.

I'll be honest with you, today's message is a hard one for me to deliver, because it convicts me as a parent and a pastor for what I neglected to consciously teach my own children. My only excuse is that my own godly church attending parents neglected to teach to me. And most likely for similar reasons you also neglected to teach your children.

We all just took it for granted that our children would learn the Commandments and the Greatest Commandment at school, or Sunday School, or from youth group or the pastor's sermons, or perhaps by just watching our example – from which they did learn much. **But we failed to realize that as parents, God gave us the specific responsibility for teaching these Commandments. And that our own observed actions would have the greatest potential for enforcing or negating those lessons with our children.** So if they didn't learn these God-honoring values directly from us, if they didn't see them consciously lived out in front of their eyes, then such values as loving God with all our heart, living by the Ten Commandments and teaching their children's children to do the same, went largely unincorporated in their own lives.

Sadly then, except for our younger members who are still raising impressionable children, whom I pray will take this message deeply to heart, for the rest of us today's lesson is another closing of the barn door after the cows have already gotten out. So today will be a time of mutual grieving for what we could have done better – had we only known our responsibility for doing so. But I promised to bring you all the stories of the Bible and in today's story, is this powerful lesson about our own parental responsibility for consciously and faithfully teaching the love of God and obedience of His laws to our children.

Perhaps even now we may in some way influence our children or grandchildren so they may once again teach their children's children that **the most important thing in life we can do is love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and "love our neighbor as ourselves."** But we are getting ahead of our story, so let's return to its beginning.

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Having liberated the children of Israel from slavery and having destroyed the Egyptian army with a powerful display of His sovereign power, God then personally led the Israelites, while providing for their every need, on a two-month journey to Mt Sinai where He first delivered to them the Ten Commandments. Commandments, which they promised to obey, but immediately broke multiple times and which along with their refusal to enter the Promised Land doomed the whole nation to 40 long years of wilderness wandering, until that first

faithless generation had died off and the second generation – now as adults – could take up the mission that their parents had failed to accomplish.

Thus now, forty years later, as recorded here in the book of Deuteronomy – which literally means “The 2<sup>nd</sup> Giving of the Law,” – before entering the Promised Land, Moses gives them another complete reading of the Ten Commandments and follows it up with a summary that has since become the most loved, and twice-daily recited verse in Jewish Culture:

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deut 6:4-9).*

They recite this verse so often, because today’s Jews intend to never again forget; which is a powerful lesson we should learn from them. So let’s take a few moments to once again remember our responsibility to both live by and consciously teach to our children the Ten Commandments along with their summary – *loving God and loving others* .

Let’s start with the last seven commandments for honoring the Sabbath, honoring our parents, not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing, not bearing false witness and not coveting. According to Jewish Rabbis, these seven Commands had already been given by God, to Noah and his descendants following the flood.

Thus these seven commands have formed the core of human morality from the most ancient of times. In his writings, the Apostle Paul even claimed that these basic moral codes had been hard wired – implanted by God – into every human regardless of their race or era of existence (Romans 2:24-25). And as such they form the foundation of all the laws ever composed by civilized societies. Of all the great civilizations that have existed both before and after the kingdom of Israel, only the Ten Commandments as first given by God through Moses in 1,445b.c. – some 3,500 years ago – still serve to influence modern law making today. **This is the reason why copies of the Ten Commandments first hung on our courthouse and schoolhouse walls; to both teach and remind us of the divine foundation beneath our civil laws.** Which is also why our modern anti-Christian culture now so strongly resists their public display; because one cannot read the Ten Commandments without perceiving the authority of God, their author, over our lives.

Now the first three commandments – worshipping God alone, making no idols and not misusing God’s name, were the ones added at Mt Sinai after God had proved to the Israelites His worthiness of such worship.

Have you noticed that while the commandments themselves are largely based on our actions – do this, don’t do that – but their summation in the Greatest Command brings them together into a single positive emotional response; Love God and love others. And if you can do this, as Jesus taught, all the other laws will be satisfied.

Of course down through the centuries, both the Jews and almost every culture since, have also at times been confused into thinking that righteousness could be earned by just keeping the laws, rather than by living out our internally motivated love of God and others. This is where the Apostles teach us that we have misunderstood the purpose of the Commands. Which were both to control our actions, but to also teach us of our sinful incapability of earning God's righteousness; Paul called the Law our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ so that we might be saved by faith – which is something the law could never accomplish (Romans 7:7 ff).

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So what is our take home for today?

That we as parents bear the greatest responsibility for both teaching and living out the Commandments in front of our children, until they have internalized the behavioral code and developed the heartfelt attitude towards which their obedience should lead: Loving the Lord our God with everything we have and our neighbors as well.

Since I opened with some silly aphorisms, let me close with a serious poem.

### **When you thought I wasn't looking**

Author: Mary Rita Schilke Sill

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw you hang my first painting on the  
refrigerator,  
and I wanted to paint another one.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw you feed a stray cat,  
and I thought it was good to be kind to  
animals.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw you make my favorite cake for me,  
and I knew that little things are special  
things.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I heard you say a prayer,  
and I believed that there was a God to talk  
to.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I felt you kiss me goodnight,  
and I felt loved.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw tears come from your eyes,  
and I learned that sometimes things hurt,  
but it's alright to cry.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw that you cared,  
and I wanted to be everything that I could  
be.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I looked....  
and I wanted to say thanks for all the  
things  
I saw when you thought I wasn't looking.

Let us be certain that they also both hear and see the Ten Commandments and the Greatest Command lived out in our lives.

Let's pray about this.