

I wonder how many of us have stood up in front of a Church congregation and had our children baptised or Christened or Dedicated? How many of us have promised, or vowed before God that not only do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour but that you will now raise your children to have that same faith. And how many of us have been at a Baptism, a Christening or a Dedication and promised as a member of that Church, to receive little children like the one being baptised and to pray for them, to help them grow in their faith and never place any stumbling blocks before them?

I wonder how many? I would guess most of us have. So... when do those promises end? When our child gets to 13 or 18 or 21 or married? When the children in our Church gets to 13 or 18 or 21 or married? When do our responsibilities cease?

I want to say they never cease! That being a Christian witness to our children never, ever stops. And helping the little ones in our Church grow in their faith never, ever stops. The way we do it may change as they get older, and as we get older, but our interest, our witness, our example, our prayers should never, ever stop.

So what should you and I be doing for our children, our grandchildren now? And what is our responsibility to the other children here tonight? Well Moses writing some 3,000 years ago gives us some timeless principles about how we should go about raising children in a godly way.

Moses if you remember was the one who led God's people out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, across the desert for 40 years and now he is about to lead his people into the Promised Land. And as they stop and draw breathe he recounts their history and especially their failings in chapters 1 to 4. He retells them the 10 commandments in chapter 5 and then he shows them in chapter 6 what is of vital importance, what should be their first priorities when they get established.

Now was it to get a good job and work hard and provide well for their kids? No. Was it to be a good housekeeper and cook healthy meals for their family? No. It was to pass the message of who God is and what God has done to the next generation of people. Nothing was more important. Nothing was more important than how you pass the baton of faith on to the children around you.

Now let me just stop there for a moment. Is that still true today? Are our kids more important than our work? Then why does the average Dad spend only 17 seconds talking to each of their children each day? Is their faith more important than their clothes or their food or their sporting abilities, then why are so few parents teaching their children the Bible or taking them to kid's club or Sunday School? Have we forgotten the legacy of the Christian faith always needs to be passed on to the subsequent generations? Have we left it up to someone else?

Let us turn to Deuteronomy 6, verses 1 and 2 and realise we must **1. Learn it** *"These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life."*

If we are going to pass something on to the next generations, we need to know it ourselves. US President, Woodrow Wilson said in an address in 1904, *"If you wish your children to be Christians you must really take the trouble to be Christians yourselves."* If we wish to teach our

children's what a relationship with God is all about, we will need to be taught ourselves what is all about. As someone once said *"You can't teach what you don't know – and you can't pass down what you don't have, so it's an absolute necessity that you have and maintain a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ."*

And that requires some hard work on our behalf. We need to learn the decrees and commands that God has given us. We need to understand what the 10 commandments are and what they require. But we also need to realise that we will never be able to fully keep them and so we need to turn to Jesus and trust in what he has done for us. As we grow older and as our situations change, we need to continue to grow in our knowledge of God. God's word has different applications when you leave school. When you go to work, when you get married and start a family, when you leave home, when you are a grandparent. So if we are to teach young people we need to know God's word and apply it to our own life as our own life changes.

For the children around us will notice whether you read the Bible every day, whether you come to Church every week, whether your knowledge of God is growing. So are you still learning about God? Is that a priority in your life? Would the children you know say that you know God and are growing in your knowledge of God?

Gospel musician Hilding Halverson tells the story of: "When my small boy was playing with his buddies in the backyard I overheard them talking one day and the conversation was, amusingly, one of those "my dad can whip you dad" routines. One boy said proudly, "My dad knows the mayor of our town!" Another said, "That's nothing my dad knows the governor of our state!" Wondering what was coming next in the programme of bragging, I heard my son say, "That's nothing my dad knows God!"

I slipped away from my place of eavesdropping with tears on my cheeks. On my knees in my room, I prayed earnestly and gratefully, "O God, I pray that my boy will always be able to say, 'My dad knows God.'" We need to Learn it and

2. Live It. (verses 3 to 6) Lets turn back to Deuteronomy 6:3-6, *"Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts."*

Its no good just learning about God if you don't then put it into practise. Kid's can't see God, but they can see whether God lives in you or not. And so our lives must reflect what our hearts and minds know is true. And the way that chiefly comes out is the way we express our love firstly for God and then for our neighbour.

We need to love God with all our heart, we need to be passionate about our daily walk with God. We need to love Him with all our soul, with everything that we have inside of us. We need to love Him with all our strength, with our hands & our legs, our actions and our being.

One writer has put it this way, *"It's not enough to "talk the talk." You must also "walk the walk." Kids can spot a phoney a mile away. So our first spiritual duty is to be people of integrity. Are you the same on the inside as the outside? Are you the same at home as at Church?" Not only we ourselves, but our entire household is affected by our faith in Christ." Kids know if we really love*

God.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “*Who you are speaks so loudly that I can’t hear what you’re saying.*” So if we go to Church on Wednesday and then live as if we didn’t Thursday, kids know that. If you leave Church and never talk to the kids in the Church kids feel that. They know whether your religion is formal or personal, they know whether you love God or love self.

Now think about the last week or so when you last spoke to the young people that God has put around you. What did you speak to them about? God? Money? Work? Sports? Things? What did you focus on when you had the opportunity to talk with others and share the things that weigh heaviest on your heart? What did those kids hear you talking about. What are we telling our children is most important in our lives? What are they seeing is the most important thing in our lives?

3. Learn it. Love it. Teach it. Lets go back to Deuteronomy 6:7-9 shall we? “*Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*”

You see if you are learning it and living it, then there will be opportunities to teach it everywhere. You are sitting at home talking to the children and what comes in as a normal part of your conversation? But the ways of the Lord. You put on a video and what is part of the selection, Christian videos that will teach them about Jesus. You go for a walk and everywhere you see the creator of the world and so your conversation reflects that. You pray with them before they go to sleep. Before you eat a meal. You don’t force God into the conversation, its just a real part of your life.

In the past we have made the mistake of thinking it is a once a week sort of thing. But its more than that. It is an all of life sort of thing. We are not ashamed of what we believe. We don’t segregate the religious& the secular. So the kids in our Church see our love for them & for the Lord. They also hear what we talk about & take note.

Now the Dads should take a lead here, for the spiritual training of our kids and grandkids is still our responsibility. It is also up to the Mums as they have so much time with their children. It is up to the grandmas and the granddads to pass on the baton of faith. Sure it is a bit harder if your own kids don’t believe, but you need to find a way where your grandkids see your love for God and hear about your love for God. Is it obvious in your home, in your person, in your conversation?

4. Learn it. Live it. Teach it and then Don’t Forget it! Verses 10 and following, “*When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you ..then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*”

Don’t forget, Moses says, who gave you the land you live in, who has provided you with your food and possessions. They haven’t come just from the sweat of your brow, but God, the one who has saved you, has provided these good things for you.

Unfortunately the materialism of this nation has blinded us to God’s good provision. The ups and downs of this live has taken our eyes off our Creator and onto ourselves. Our preoccupation with homes and jobs and money and status has meant that we accumulate more and more perishable

objects and neglect the imperishable that will last for all eternity. Friends, we can't afford to forget who God is and what he has done for us. And if we see our community, our society, our family is forgetting it, we need to do something about it.

We need to think about how we as a Church can reach the younger generations and we should be willing to sacrifice some of the things which we like in order to reach them. Things like music, buildings, style of service need to be thought through and maybe changed in order to make sure other generations remember the Lord.

We need to place an emphasis on families and on the ministry to children. We should take up the offer of teaching primary school kids Scripture in school, we should find ways of financing a Scripture teacher into our high schools, we need to support the work of kids church and homework help. We can't afford to stop praying for our young people, those who are here tonight and those who aren't.

Let me end with a story. In the country of Armenia, in 1988, Samuel sent his young son, Armand, off to school. He looked him in the eye & said, "Have a good day at school, and remember, no matter what, I'll always be there for you." They hugged and the boy ran off to school.

Hours later, a powerful earthquake rocked the area. Samuel heard about it on the radio, he then grabbed his coat and headed for the schoolyard. When he reached the area he saw Armand's school was a pile of debris. Other parents were standing around crying but Samuel found the place where Armand's classroom used to be and began pulling a broken beam off the pile of rubble. He then grabbed a rock and put it to the side, and then grabbed another one.

One of the parents looking on asked, "What are you doing?" "Digging for my son," Samuel answered. The man then said, "You're just going to make things worse! The building is unstable," and tried to pull Samuel away from his work. But Samuel set his jaw and kept working. As time wore on, one by one, the other parents left.

But all through the night and into the next day, Samuel continued digging. Other parents placed flowers and pictures of their children on the ruins but, Samuel just kept working. Finally, as he picked up a beam and pushed it out of the way, he heard a faint cry. "Help! Help!" "Papa?" Samuel began to dig furiously. Finally he could see his son. "Come on out, son!" he said with relief. "No" Armand said. "Let the other kids come out first because I know you'll get me." Child after child emerged until, finally, little Armand appeared.

Samuel took him in his arms and Armand said, "I told the other kids not to worry because you told me that you'd always be there for me!"

Fourteen children were saved that day... because one father was faithful. I wonder, how many will be saved because of your faithfulness, because of this Church's faithfulness, because we have kept the promises we made to God for our family and our Church family?