

“Hope For The Home”

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

As we open God’s Word today, I want to share something that the Lord has been laying heavily on my heart for several months. As we all know, we are officially in the start of the fall semester. Over the last few months many have been to various vacation spots, summer camps, mission trips, family visits, etc. Last week several were out of town getting their last opportunity for a family trip before the grind of the fall semester begins. But, now that is behind us. Classes have started for all students from the preschool through college. With this start, we find ourselves kicking off several things related to this fall season. As we all get started with learning new schedules and getting back to a consistent routine, I want to share something that I believe is vital for every Christian. When we ended the spring semester, we concluded with the focus of living out our faith. In studying we were reminded that when our faith in Jesus is real and vibrant, it will change who we are. As a result, when Jesus is truly the Lord of our life we will live that faith out loud everywhere we are. If our faith is real we will live it out in the community, in the workplace, and in the church. But, we see first and foremost that if our faith is real it will first be lived out in the home. This morning as we kick off our fall semester I want us to turn our attention back there for just this Sunday.

If there was ever a day and a time where we need to focus on the importance of the home it is today. We live in a culture of so many broken homes and situations that we are seeing the evidences in vast numbers. As our culture has progressed over the past thirty years, it is hard to see how the home has progressed. A quick look at the cultural differences and challenges show very clearly the need for healthy homes.

Statistics on faith in the home.

These questions cause us to wonder, “Is there any hope for the home? Is there any hope for my future family? Is there any hope for my children? Is there any hope for me?” Fortunately for us, this is not the first time this question had been asked. I believe, in many ways, that this was the question of the Israelites in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. Because of their painful past and present circumstances, there were many wondering, “Is there hope for me and my family?” And God gave them an overwhelming answer, “Yes, there is hope!” Not only did God give them great encouragement, but He gave them clear instruction. It is this instruction that we focus on today.

Show Text

You may be here this morning and think, “Pastor, this message isn’t for me. I’m not even married yet, and I don’t even have any real prospects.” You may think, “Dude, I’m just a freshman in college. I’m not going to even think about kids for another 10 years.” You might say, “Well, Matthew, this is too late. My kids are already grown and out of the house.” I want to remind you that this is God’s Word for all of us today. While there is direct application to those who are parents and those who desire to be, there are also truths about our faith in this passage that apply to every single one of us. These actions are so important because of the emphasis that God Himself placed

on them. When God gave these words, He signified the importance by repeating the action. In verse 3 He said, “O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it.” Then in verse 4 He commanded, “Hear, O Israel!” It would be like me today saying, “Sit up. Give me your undivided attention. And, listen.” The Jews know this verse as the “Shema”, which means “to hear, to behold, to give strict attention to.” In that culture, they understood the significance of the attention so greatly that the quoting of this verse became a daily practice in Judaism and from the earliest of ages the Jewish boys were taught to recite it. What is it that God wants us to direct our attention to? There are four main calls to action that God gave the Israelites that He still calls us to today. Doing so will impact our lives and our homes in amazing ways.

I. A Call to Believe (vs. 4)

Now picture the scene for just a moment. As Moses gives us these words in Deuteronomy, he has been through quite an adventure with the Israelites. The Israelites, who once were enslaved in Egypt, had been released to leave and go to a new land. Nearly 40 years earlier, Moses had sent out spies to go see what this Promised Land looked like and what had to be done to claim it. Unfortunately, however, only a few of the spies had faith that God would be with them and give them the land. The majority of the spies doubted God and stirred up fear in the people. The end result is that God didn’t allow any of the older generation to enter the Promised Land. They spent the next 40 years wandering in the wilderness and one by one the older generation eventually passed away. As we come to the book of Deuteronomy Moses, the leader, is now an aging man. He knows that the time is drawing near for the young generation to claim the promise that God had given them. He also knows that his time to die is drawing near. It is here that he begins to address the key important truths for the Israelites to understand and know. Let me ask you, how would you feel? You are young, under the age of 20. Most of the elderly have already passed. Apparently, they did a lot of things wrong. You are about to go into a brand-new land that you know little to nothing about. And, your well-loved and respected leader is about to be gone. What do you do? Where do you turn? Surely these young people needed encouragement, instruction, and hope. God, of course, didn’t disappoint. He gave them a clear word of hope. He said, “Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”

Please understand that Moses was both reminding these young Israelites Who was indeed the true God as well as calling for them to affirm their belief in Him. Think about this for a moment. As we read through Deuteronomy we sense the urgency in Moses’ voice. He knows he’s about to die. He knows that Joshua would soon lead. He knows that the Israelites were going to face many challenges and distractions. But He also knew what was most important. In this moment, Moses’ greatest concern was their spiritual welfare. He knew that if they were right with God, everything else would be ok. So, Moses points the people to God. **He wanted them to recognize the uniqueness of the God of Israel.** In fact, in the first 5 chapters of Deuteronomy this is exactly what Moses has been doing. There were many gods in existence at that time. Remember they had been enslaved in Egypt. Ancient Egypt had over 2,000 different gods that they worshipped. The Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land that was already filled with other peoples, all with their own gods and ideals. The thing that each of these false religions had in common is that the object of their worship, their god, was a limited, lifeless (or soon to be) object. Moses knew that

mankind is incurably religious and if they aren't in relationship with the true God of heaven then they will find something else to worship, even if it means worshipping themselves and their own ideals. Sadly, Moses had seen this first-hand when he was on the mountain with the true, living God. By the time he got done with his meeting, which only lasted a few days, the Israelites had built a golden calf and began worshipping it. Moses is reminding them that our God isn't some lifeless idol. Our God is not some fallen, imperfect, power-hungry being. Our God is THE God. Our God is the One who made the heavens and the earth. Our God is the One who created man in His image. Our God is the One who established a covenant with our forefather Abraham. Our God is the One who raised me up to set you free. Our God is the One who sent the plagues to Egypt to cause the evil Pharaoh to let us go. Our God is the One who has led us every step of the way. Our God is the One who has provided us with food, even in the wilderness. Our God is the One who has caused our sandals and our clothes to last in the wilderness for 40 years. Our God is the One who has promised us a great hope and a glorious future. Our God is the One who will lead us into the Promised Land. Moses' point was very clear. It is summed up best in **Deuteronomy 4:35, 39**, "To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him... Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other." I am convinced that if we are to have hope in our homes, it must begin first in me. And the key to my hope is not found in myself, but in believing in God and recognizing His unique purpose and plan for my life.

II. A Call to Relationship (vs. 5)

One of the primary differences in the God that we serve is what we see right here. The true God of heaven is a God of relationship. The many idols in the ancient world had no relationship. They were dead, lifeless objects. They were manmade creations of fantasy and mystery that were created largely to manipulate the masses or to condone their own sinful desires. Even in much of Judaism, many turned away from idols and then turned instead to rules, rites, and regulations. These became idols in their own sense. Since that time so-called prophets have come along with all sorts of moral and seemingly profound messages. But, in every single one of them they can be boiled down with a list of rules, laws, and creeds. In order to please the so-called deity, one must do all these different things. But, when it comes to the true God of heaven we don't see a list of do's. Instead we hear a common four-letter word – "LOVE." Love is the language of relationship. You and I use the word "love" to describe those we are in relationship with. If I were describing, for example, my relationship with my wife, I would not describe to you all the many things that she does for me that bless me. I would say, "This is my love." I would affectionately express my love for her. Last week when announcing our guest speaker, I didn't tell you all the many things he has done for me as a friend. I simply affectionately said that he's my closest friend and expressed my love for he and his wife. My point is that love is the expression of relationship.

God has always been and always will be a God of relationship. From the very beginning, He created Adam and Eve and He walked with Adam in the cool of the day. There was relationship. When God called Abraham out to a land that He would one day give to His descendants, God was establishing relationship. When God raised up Moses to lead the Israelites, again, He was extending relationship. Ultimately, it would be through these very people – the Jews – that God

would offer relationship to the entire world, to all mankind. **2 Corinthians 5:19a** explains it well, “Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.” From the beginning of time, God knew that mankind would sin and reap it’s devastating consequences. So, in love, He chose the Jews to be the people through which He would send His Son into the world to make a way for us to be delivered from the punishment of our sin and enjoy a relationship with Him. John 4:22 tells us simply, “Salvation is from the Jews.” And what is the basis for our deliverance? It is His love. **John 3:16** explains, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” The basis for this relationship is the love of God.

It is only fitting that, since God has expressed His love for us in such profound ways, that His call would be for us to reciprocate that love. Moses said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” We could say it simply, “Love God with your entire being. With all that you are, all that you have, and all that you do.” Love Him completely. God doesn’t say, “Be obedient. Do this list of things. Earn My favor.” He simply calls us to love Him. Love Him with your heart – that’s your affection. Love Him with your soul – with every fiber of your being, with total sincerity. Love Him with your mind – with your intellect and will, choose to love God. Love Him with your strength – with your actions, your abilities, and your work. Please understand, Moses knew the key to their future and the key to their lineage wasn’t found in their financial security, their military prowess, their fame in the history books, their diversity of experiences, their secular accomplishment, their fleshly pursuits, or anything else the world had to offer. The key to a life and a legacy that mattered was to believe in God and have a close relationship with Him.

III. A Call to Devotion (vs. 6, 8-9)

As Moses was preparing the Israelites for this new season of life, God had already made it clear that there were going to be giants in the land. There were going to be some major obstacles to overcome. There were going to be numerous enemies coming against them. However, the greatest challenges they would face would not be the challenges of external foes, but the challenges of the temptations they would face in their own flesh. They would be tempted to get distracted from the mission and the purpose. They would be tempted to forsake a real relationship with the true God of heaven in exchange for a worthless worship of a dead idol. They would be tempted to compromise their convictions to give in to the desires of their flesh instead of living holy before God. They would be tempted to proudly think that they were experiencing victory because of their own strength and ability instead of recognizing it was all by God’s power. They would be tempted to get so busy and distracted that they would forget God altogether. Moses had spent many years leading this group. He knew their tendencies and their struggles. So, God raised him up in this moment to challenge the people to do something very specific. This would be the key to living in victory. This would be the key to overcoming distractions. This would be the key to rejecting all forms of idolatry. This would be the key to abstaining from the pagan practices of immorality. This would be the key to remembering the Lord and His power. The key is this – DEVOTE YOURSELF TO THE WORD OF GOD!

Remember that Moses was simply a messenger of God. There was nothing great about Moses. He had several flaws and limitations. He was simply God’s servant. When Moses said, “The words

that I am commanding you today should be on your heart,” he was simply a statesman for God. He was saying, “This Word of God you should always keep on your heart.” Please understand, God is showing us the importance of us reading, studying, and embracing His Word. We must have God’s Word on our heart because **Jeremiah 17:9** tells us that “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” If our heart are not filled and led by the Word of God, it can deceive us and lead us into all sorts of things. Just like the Israelites did, if we don’t make God’s Word a priority in our life and devote ourselves to it, we will compromise, give in to all sorts of temptations, and cause ourselves and others much grief and heartache. We must fill our hearts with God’s Word.

The idea of God’s Word being on our heart means much more than just hearing the Word. It’s more than just sound waves hitting the ear. It’s more than just words in and words out. It is a matter of us focusing our whole being – our mind, our heart, our will – on the Lord and receiving what His Word has to say. We see this illustrated throughout the Gospels as Jesus says, on numerous occasions, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Most everyone had actual ears to hear and the ability to hear; however, not everyone truly embraced His Word. If our lives are to be changed, we must devote ourselves to God’s Word.

This call of devotion to God’s Word was so powerful that God instructed them to literally bind the writing of His Word as a sign on their hand and as frontals on their foreheads. They were even to write the words on the doorposts of their houses and on the gates. In that culture, the commoners didn’t have a copy of the entire Word of God. Only the scribes and priests were privileged to have this. However, the implication is that what they knew of God’s Word was to be written down and was to be kept near and dear to them. The Jews took this very literally and wore portions of Scripture in little containers called phylacteries on their forehead and left arm. They also attached a small container of Scripture, called a mezuzah, to the front door and on every door of the house. This was a symbolic picture to the Jews that their house was to be a sanctuary for the Lord where His Word was valued, loved, and obeyed. These symbolic pictures sound strange to us today, and certainly they had their limitation. Merely having these symbols didn’t mean that someone was truly devoted to the Word of God. But the clear reason God gave this instruction was so that they would devote themselves to His Word. Still today we are called to devote ourselves to God’s Word. **Colossians 3:16a** says it plainly, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.”

If we are to experience victory in our hearts and in our homes, we must be devoted to accepting and obeying God’s Word. **Warren Wiersbe** concludes, “Believers today must find their life and victory in God’s Word. Unless we know what God commands, we can’t obey Him; but if we know His commandments, believe them, and obey them, then His power goes to work in our lives.”

Maybe you are wondering how all of this applies to the home. I will bring this all together in just a minute, but it is vitally important that before we talk about our calling in the home that we first deal with our own hearts and lives. We can’t give what we don’t live. We can’t pass on a Godly spiritual legacy to future generations if we don’t first have a right relationship with God ourselves. So, I ask you, “Do you believe in God? Do you have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ and His life that was given for you? Are you devoting yourself to His Word?” If the answer is “No” to any of these questions, I encourage and invite you to be in a right relationship with God

today. Don't put off until tomorrow what God is wanting you to experience today. Don't wait until you're older and children are looking at you before you get serious about God. Make the decision today. Only then are you ready to answer the final call.

IV. A Call to Teach (vs. 7)

Every parent understands the importance of teaching their children. We inherently know that there are things that they don't know but need to. As a result, we teach them all sorts of things. We teach them how to say "Da-Da." We teach them how to eat their food. We teach them how to play with toys, how to throw a ball, how to say "Roll Tide!" ☺ They naturally have curiosities, so we also have to teach them about things that can harm them. We teach them to avoid harmful things. There are also social things that we teach them. We teach them to have manners, how to get along with others, how to make new friends, how to say "I'm sorry." We understand, naturally, that there are things that they must learn, and we quickly recognize that it is our primary responsibility to teach them.

What is most important to you about what you teach your children? What is the most important thing you can teach them? There may be many things come to your mind, but notice what God says we are to teach them. He is showing us that when we are sitting together with them, when we are going about our business in the community, when we are approaching bed time, and when we are waking up, at all times as parents it is our calling from God to be teaching our children the Word of God. Notice the Scripture says, "Teach them diligently." It means that we are to be intentional, persistent, hardworking, and faithful to do this. So how do we do this? Maybe this intimidates you. Maybe you fear that you don't have all the right answers. Maybe you don't feel like a Bible scholar. That's ok. How should you teach them?

A. Through Our Instruction

If you are intimidated by the thought of instructing your children spiritually, I have great news for you. God doesn't expect you to have all the answers. In fact, can I let you in on a secret? Our pastoral staff has a lot of years of study and many degrees, but we don't have all the answers either. You don't have to be an expert. Notice God simply says, "You shall talk of them." It's that simple. Talk about God's Word. Friend, if you read God's Word in your family, I'm telling you that the Holy Spirit can use that to speak to you and to your children. And, as you get in God's Word you will begin to see ways that God's Word is speaking in your life. As you share that with your kids it will encourage them, inspire them, and at times challenge them. But, parents, make no mistake about it, this is your calling from God. **Ephesians 6:4** commands, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Remember, your children are a gift from God. **Psalm 127:3** tells us that "children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward." But, I also remind you that to whom much is given, much is required. As parents, it is our primary responsibility to instruct our children to know the Lord and His Word. Author **Steve Stroope** said it well, "Our children must discover truth for themselves, but that does not mean we should allow them to create their own truth.

Absolute truth is real, and it has been revealed in the Bible. Our role as parents is to guide our children in its discovery.”

B. Through Our Example

We should seek to be an example to our children. We would do well to follow the exhortation that Paul gave Titus in **Titus 2:7-8a**, “In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach.” Notice the next key to our teaching. Yes, it is to be done verbally through our communication, but it is also to be done consistently. As we read when this communication is to happen we get a clear picture. God is saying, “As you live your life and go about your everyday business and responsibilities, be intentional about pointing your children to Me.” Please hear me very well this morning. As your pastor, we pray diligently for you, every one of you, and especially for your children. We work diligently to prepare and proclaim God’s Word creatively to everyone and every age. However, when it comes to our children, as creative as we might be in sharing God’s Word, they are far more likely to believe what they experience in the home. In other words, what you profess and what you practice in the home has a profound impact on your children for good or for bad. I want to challenge and encourage you - don’t minimize your role in raising your children for the Lord. We are so grateful for the opportunity to come alongside of you to support and assist you as you make disciples in the home. But, please understand that the primary Christian influence on your children should be you. Author **Kurt Bruner** summarized it well, “As time has passed, parents have allowed the church to take the lead when it came to the spiritual training of their children. Gradually, parents have become passive observers of this all-important process, abdicating their role to such a degree that many Christians actually believe it is the job of Sunday School to instill faith in their children. Certainly the church is an important partner, but the primary responsibility remains with mom and dad.”

Why is this so important? First, because God is the One who establishes the home. Long before marriage and the home was defined by the government, it was established, instituted, and ordained by God. He is the author of marriage and the family, and He knows what is best. Second, because God’s design proves that the parents are the primary influencers of the children for good or bad.

****ILL:** We all know the importance of an investment. We invest our money, our influence, and even our time. Let me the illustrate the practical picture of the influence you have over your children. Moms and Dads, you have only been given so many pennies. Use them wisely for the glory of God and for the good of your children and others.