

God On The Sidewalk

One of you recently called feeling a bit overwhelmed and guilty about your time in the Word of God with your children. Before you finished speaking you already had my heart, and was prepared to lift you up as high as possible. I think we can all agree - someone making a call to discuss their role in teaching their children already has a heart with a working compass.

My confession: I spend quite a bit of time studying the Bible by myself and with many here, yet my children many times get the leftovers. This is always on my radar, and truth is, it ebbs and flows. And you, beloved of Christ, have many responsibilities throughout the day. You're working long hours, raising children that need so much of your time and energy, and on top of that, normal stresses you have to fight that drain your energy and rob your attention. It's easy to fall behind, get our priorities mixed up, and find it difficult to make our way back.

Truly. I get it.

Today's goal is not to guilt trip you into studying the Word. I'm not trying to bury you with bible burden. The Bible is not meant to feel like a burden. Instead, we're asking, "**How do we build homes where our children learn to see God everywhere?**" We're going to do that by looking at Deut. 6:4-9. This passage offers a beautiful pattern: **Love it. Live it. Teach it. Talk about it.**

I. LOVE IT: God's Word Must First Be on Our Hearts (Deut. 6:4-6)

A. Before we teach God's Word, we must love Him.

1. It's difficult to effectively teach our children to love God if they don't believe we love Him. This is bigger than developing a stellar study routine. It's about Dad/Mom knowing, loving, trusting, and rejoicing in the Lord.
2. You have to see God for who He is before you can help your children see Him. If I don't see His goodness, how can I point it out? If I don't trust His way, how will my child? If I don't lean on Him through storms, why would my son? If Mom doesn't depend on Him for validation, will her daughter?
3. Our first question today isn't, "Am I studying enough with my children?" It's "Do my children see that I sincerely love God?"

II. LIVE IT: Let Them See That You Believe It (Deut. 6:6)

A. Before our children learned how to speak, they were watching.

1. Generally speaking our children will mirror what we DO, not what we SAY.
 - a) Does Dad pray when he's worried?
 - b) Does Mom serve those in need?
 - c) Does Dad apologize when he's done wrong?
 - d) Does Mom forgive those who have hurt her?
 - e) Do they seek God's Word a Tuesday?
 - f) Do they express gratitude towards God?
 - g) Do they mold the family calendar around His kingdom?
2. This is where Christianity becomes convincing to our children. It's answering the question: Do Mom and Dad **believe** in God? Do they **talk** about God or **know** God?

III. TEACH IT: Bring Your Children to the Word (Deut. 6:7)

A. There is a place for intentional, structured instruction. We should not leave our children's knowledge of God to chance. We don't hope they'll pick up the Word one day and create good habits. **We bring our children to the Word.**

1. Toddlers & Young Children

- a) Keep it simple. Tell Bible stories. Repeat foundational truths.
- b) God is lovely, dependable, powerful, and protector. We are His. He is our God.
- c) We're building security and molding their identity over time.

2. As They Grow

- a) Raise the bar. Give more detail. Start book studies.
- b) Begin asking questions. "Why did they do that?" "What would faithfulness look. Like here?" Encourage them to think.

3. As They Become Young Adults

- a) Go deeper. Let them wrestle with difficult questions. Discuss challenging passages.
- b) Talk about objections to Christianity. Be objective. Ask, "Why do others believe that? Is there any validity in their argument?"
- c) They need wisdom. This goes beyond Bible facts. How do they apply what they've learned? We're teaching them to stand on their own whether we're there or not.

B. A Word to Fathers and Both Parents

1. Fathers: take this responsibility seriously. Don't assume Mom will handle the spiritual growth of the children. I know you're tired when you get home - right there with you. But we're called to lead, so let's lead. Our children should know that God matters deeply to Dad.
2. Parents: encourage and help one another. Hold one another accountable. Find a rhythm that works in your home (morning, before/during/after dinner, bedtime). The exact schedule isn't the point. **It's the priority.**

IV. TALK ABOUT IT: Bring the Word Into Your Children's World (Deut. 6:7-9)

A. Perhaps it's simply convenient verbiage, "teach" and "talk," but I'm sure you've noticed a difference between planned structure teaching and impromptu discussion about God around the house. Our instruction comes in different forms. My Sunday am Bible class differs from my sermons, for example. Israel was instructed to teach and talk to their children in their home, when they wake up, walk by the way, and lie down.

B. God on the Sidewalk: I remember walking Cadence to kindergarten one morning. As we walked along the sidewalk, we began to talk about God, His care, and Word. I told her that God and His Word is like the sidewalk. It comes from God (her Daddy didn't make the sidewalk). It's made level for safe travels. It leads us to where we need to go. It has boundaries so as to respect others and protect ourselves. It's there for our good.

1. Nature provides many opportunities.
2. Daily encounters/news (positive or negative).

C. I'm not saying this is more important than structured studies, but this is overlooked and perhaps the approach that is most helpful to your child. Why?

1. It's practical application.
2. It's convincing. Dad/Mom believe it.
3. It's convincing. It becomes real to them.

V. Where We're Headed (Deut. 6:20-25)

A. Here's the sweet spot. They take initiative and see what's good for them.

1. Bring your children to the Word.
2. Bring the Word into your children's world.
3. Jesus ultimately brings them to their prepared home.