

Family Discipleship | Deuteronomy 6:4-7

I became a parent almost two years ago. Sometimes my wife and I sit back and laugh at some of the things that we never thought we would say:

Stop trying to eat the dog food.
Get that princess out of the VCR.
Is that chocolate or poop?

World-model - Raising well-rounded, well-educated, happy kids.
We want to look good in a picture frame
Instead we look like this:

How do we define success as parents? We live in a world that is dramatically dominated by statistics. We see presidential approval ratings and poll numbers, many of you can tell me how many passing yards James Vandenburg had yesterday. But when it comes to parenting it's a little bit harder to define the base of statistics. Most parents would examine the state of their children and conclude they are:

- Provided with their basic needs: food, clothing, shelter
- Physically healthy
- Performing at or beyond their grade level
- In a secure and comfortable home
- Monitored and cared for by parents
- Involved with church services and programs
- Connected to decent friends
- Not involved in gangs
- Not taking drugs
- Not alcoholics
- Not out-of-control sexually
- Not involved in a cult or in satanic activity
- Not the victim of physical or emotional abuse
- Without a criminal record or related problems

“These measures are meaningful—as far as they go. But here’s the invisible problem that hampers the development of America’s children:

We are measuring their well-being based upon the wrong standards. Without realizing it, we have made ourselves the judge and jury of what is right and wrong, good and bad, useful and useless in relation to our children's lives. You are not likely to get the right outcome if you base your actions on the assessment of the wrong things."

What are we really seeking to provide for our children?

Think about it practically with me this way for a second--we've been through this progression several times of their students to make many of you may pick up on this--

We teach kids that they need to go to school to get good grades why? So they can go to college widening to go to college so they can get a good job why do they need to get a good job so they can make money by the need to make money so they can buy a house and they need to keep making money so they can buy stuff to fill out that house and many of us do that because when we get our house. In the spring and summer we have a yard sale and the stuff that we still like that is now junk we pass on to other people who put it in their house.

When you think about it things are not great in America right now but we still have an industry called self-storage, which is basically saying "hey we have so much stuff that we don't have anywhere to put it anymore sarong to pay someone to give us a place to put our stuff."

If that's all we are teaching our children that the purpose of life is, if that's the value that we are teaching we failed his parents.

I want talk to you about the purpose of us being here and having this particular sermon this particular morning right now because we aren't just trying to give you another parenting book

In fact over the last 21 years there've been an average of 10 parenting books published every day. That's more than 75,000 books.

As a church we don't want to offer you a parenting book. We don't want to offer you a new program. We want to instead begin the conversation today of how we can combine two very significant influences. In fact we want to talk about how we can combine the two influences that God

ordained as part of his plan for raising up disciples.

We feel that the purpose of the church is to, simply put, make disciples.

Over the next six weeks to be really awesome when Chris Carr leads us through this series called Disciple because we'll look very, very basically what we think the church is here for and specifically what Harmony Bible Church is here to do in the community in southeast Iowa.

We believe God has called the church to be a body of believers devoted to making disciples. The primary way the disciples are made in God's plan is through the family. The family is a picture of the Grace relationship between God and his bride the church in Jesus Christ as our savior and the people that he died to save.

I think that all of us agree that God set up these two institutions the church and the family as a part of his plan to bring disciples to himself I think that for decades the church and the family have been struggling because they have mostly been operating independently of one another.

It's like trying to help someone move a couch . . . by taking turns. The church and the family have been trying to do the same thing, but haven't been as effective because they haven't been partnering together and combining their influence the next generation.

In his book, Think Orange (which has influenced our strategy here at Harmony in an awesome way), Reggie Joiner says "As long as churches do only what churches are doing, they will get only the results they are presently getting. And as long as families do only what families are doing, they will produce only the outcomes they are presently producing. To experience a different outcome, we have to embrace a different strategy."

There are five principles that drive everything we do as a family discipleship team here at Harmony. We take them straight out of an important passage of Scripture and they greatly influence the way we minister to the families in each of our specific areas. I want to share these five principles with you today.

They come from Deuteronomy 6, one of the most important passages in the Old Testament. This is Moses' farewell speech to the people God called him to lead.

The people of Israel who stood on the plains across the Jordan and heard Moses' words knew they were true. They knew from personal experience. Many of them had as children seen God's acts of judgment on Egypt. They had all eaten the manna, all followed the fiery cloud, all participated in the victory over Moab. Every one had evidence of God's presence and of His concern.

But when this generation crossed the River Jordan, many things would change. The manna would cease, and they would begin to eat the corn of that land. The cloud that guided them would be gone. There would be victories, but the daily evidence of God's supernatural presence would be removed. This generation knew from direct, personal experience, that they truly were special to God. But how could they communicate to the generation to come the specialness of their relationship with God? How do we, who know God now, share His reality with others, and help them to experience Him as real? (Richards, L., & Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher's commentary* (147). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.)

This passage is so important that when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, he referenced Deuteronomy 6:4.

5 Guiding Principles of Family Discipleship¹

1. Widen the Circle (Hear o Israel)
 - a. Moses is speaking to all of Israel about the importance of families passing on their faith to the next generation. In other words, he was talking to every parent and every leader. As important as the monologue was for parents, it was not only for them; Moses was speaking to all of Israel. The culture of the Israelites was that of a community, and not only were parents listening, but so were other relatives in the crowd—siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc. (Joiner)
 - b. A parent can influence three relational areas of a child's life

¹ 5 guiding principles adapted from Reggie Joiner's "Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide"

- i. Their relationship with God
 - ii. Their relationships within the home
 - iii. Their relationships outside the home
 - 1. This IS going to happen
 - 2. You *can* pursue strategic relationships
 - a. 46% of students who stayed in church beyond high school said five or more adults at church had invested time with them personally and spiritually
 - b. This is the most obvious way that HBC can step in and combine influence with the home
 - i. Small Group leaders
 - ii. Gospel Project
2. Imagine the end (The Lord our God, the Lord is one)
 - a. The Lord our God, the Lord is one – this is the truth that everything we do has to be based on. If God is not God, then anything else we do is worthless.
 - b. If we are not leading (as parents, or a church) with the ultimate goal of God being glorified, we've lost before we began.
 - c. Who is the main character of your family's story?
 - i. Do you need to hit the pause button as a family and be reminded that God is God?
 - d. Action steps
 - i. Create an environment where you're reminded that God is God
 - ii. Don't try to be the hero of the story.
3. Fight for the Heart (Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength)
 - a. By saying this, Moses defined the heart of the relationship God desires with man.
 - i. Christianity has become much more known for what we don't do than what we do.
 - ii. That is because we have a tendency to reduce our relationship with God to a set of rules to follow, because rules are easy to quantify.

1. This is legalism, which Chris spent some time talking about a few weeks ago.
 - iii. Israel was on the brink. They had been led through the wilderness for a generation and were about to see the payoff of God's promises. The next generation wasn't going to wander in the wilderness. They weren't going to remember on their own God's faithfulness in the desert.
 - iv. They needed to be taught, not the rules, but to love God.
 - v. Action step – Don't fight to win the argument, fight to win the heart.
 1. Notice Deut. 6:20 (The Message) 20–24 The next time your child asks you, "What do these requirements and regulations and rules that GOD, our God, has commanded mean?" tell your child, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and GOD powerfully intervened and got us out of that country. We stood there and watched as GOD delivered miracle-signs, great wonders, and evil-visitations on Egypt, on Pharaoh and his household. He pulled us out of there so he could bring us here and give us the land he so solemnly promised to our ancestors. That's why GOD commanded us to follow all these rules, so that we would live reverently before GOD, our God, as he gives us this good life, keeping us alive for a long time to come.
 - a. He didn't say "because God said" he said "because of who God is"
4. Make it Personal (These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.)
- a. Basic Principle: It has to be in you before it's in them.
 - b. FCA is trying to reach *coaches* to reach players.
 - c. Don't be discouraged
 - i. We all have things in us we don't want to be in our kids.
 - ii. Parenting is unique, because there is no prep class.

1. A lot of parents don't have parenting problem, they have a sin problem.
 2. This should be encouraging, not discouraging. When you imagine the end, you know that God is God and He is both in control of your life and your children's.
 3. One of the most powerful things that children can see is God at work in the lives of their parents, but they can't see who their parents are becoming if they never see who they were in the first place. Otherwise, how will they know the difference God has made and continues to make in their parents' lives? It is the firsthand look at that difference that will give them hope for their future and faith in what God can do in them. Reggie Joiner. Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide... (Kindle Locations 698-701). Kindle Edition.
5. Create a Rhythm (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.)
- a. It was going to be easier to stay in a rhythm in the desert than in Canaan
 - b. This idea of "impressing on" is bigger than just teaching. When I think about teaching, my default idea is of sitting in a classroom. That's great for learning math. That's not very good for learning how to fish. Football practice is a great example. Many teams gather in classrooms to watch film, then take the field to practice what they saw.
 - c. Look closer at what he said: **sit, walk, lie down, get up**
 - i. It is important for parents and leaders to cooperate with the way life naturally happens. It is important for parents to create a rhythm that works for their family. (Reggie Joiner. Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide.)
 - d. Evaluate how you spend time as a family

- i. Be strategic
- ii. Prioritize

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