

**Facing the Challenge of Parenting
Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

When Lynn and I chose to have children, I don't believe that we could have ever imagined how truly challenging this very rewarding, but difficult, task would be. I am sure that all parents here this morning would say, "Amen!" to what I have just said.

But Christian parents are not without resources. The Lord has provided us an action plan in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** that will greatly increase the odds of our children growing up to enjoy all the blessedness that comes to those who love and serve Him, and isn't this what we should want for our children above all else?

In fact, if we want something else for our children, more than for them to live in the blessedness that comes to those who love and serve the Lord, then we have already failed. We have lost our way as parents and have exposed our children to a life of futility wherein they will be forever chasing the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but never realizing it. The only way for our children to be truly satisfied is in the Lord, and we must by the grace of God attempt to convey this to them.

But how are we going to this? It is by following God's action plan in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**. **"Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! (5) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might (6) These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. (8) You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. (9) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."**

Moses gave these exhortations to the nation of Israel while they were on the plains of Moab just east of the Jordan River across from the City of Jericho. And why did Moses give these exhortations to Israel at that particular time and at that particular place? He gave them these exhortations in order to

prepare them for success in respect to a very monumental task that they were about to undertake.

Very shortly Israel, under the leadership of Joshua, would cross over the Jordan to initiate a lengthy military campaign within the Promised Land. This task was certainly far beyond their strength and abilities, but if they would simply heed the exhortations that Moses gave in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**, they could be assured of success along with all of its subsequent blessings.

And this brings us to the point that I would like to make this morning. When we are faced with monumental tasks that exceed our strength and abilities, such as parenting, the odds of success will be greatly increased if we follow God's action plan in Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

My hope for this message this morning is not only that we will understand the action plan spelled out in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**, but that we would commit ourselves to follow it and in doing so might enter into the blessedness of it in respect to ourselves and also our families. So what does **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** spell out as our first action?

Action 1: Making sure that we love God supremely (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Let me read for you **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**. **“Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! (5) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”** Clearly, I believe, it is obvious from these words that the very first action that Israel needed to take if they were going to entertain any thought of success, when it came to the monumental task of crossing the Jordan and occupying the promised land, was for them to commit themselves to love God supremely, and the same thing is true for Christian parents today in regard to the monumental task of parenting. We must also, as our first action, commit ourselves to love God supremely. So now let us take a closer look at this specific action as it is spelled out in these two verses.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is known as the “Shema” meaning “hear.” It starts with a fundamental statement of truth about God followed by a fundamental duty to God.

So, what is the fundamental statement of truth about God? **“Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”** When Moses told the people that

the Lord “is our God,” he was pointing out to Israel how special they were since no other people group had Jehovah as their God.

So what was the first thing that God wanted the nation of Israel to hear through His Servant Moses? **“The Lord [Jehovah] is our God.”** He wanted them to hear this so that they might see themselves as unique. But the Lord was not satisfied with simply pointing out their uniqueness. He also wanted to point out His uniqueness.

So let us continue to read **Deuteronomy 6:4** and what does it say? **“The Lord is our God [and then He says], the Lord is one!”** What does this mean? When Moses told the people of Israel that the “The Lord is one,” he meant that their God (Jehovah) was the one absolute God and there was no other God besides Him.

So, what was the first thing that God through His servant Moses wanted Israel to hear? He wanted them to hear a very basic fundamental truth: **“The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”** But this was not all that He wanted Israel to hear. He also wanted them to hear what the Lord their God, the one absolute God, required of them. And what was that?

The duty of Israel to their God, the only true God, was to love Him with all their heart, soul and might (Deuteronomy 6:5). Let me read for you **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** one more time. **“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! (5) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”**

Why would God expect Israel to love Him? He would expect Israel to love Him because He, as the one and only absolute God, had chosen to make them the object of His love. And how had He manifested His love toward them? He manifested His love toward them by choosing them to be the recipients of the Law and the covenants.

We, as the church, are no different than the nation of Israel. The one absolute and true God has also chosen to love us. And how has He chosen to love us? He chose us before the foundation of the world to be the recipients of the gift of salvation made possible through the death, burial and resurrection of His Son. And how should we respond to this unfathomable

kindness? We, like Israel, we should commit ourselves to love Him with all our heart, soul and might.

So, what does it mean to love God with all our heart? Loving God with our “heart” means to love Him with our “mind.” This is supported by the LXX that substitutes the Hebrew word for “heart” with the Greek term for “mind. The Israelites were not being commanded to have emotional feelings of love toward God, but they were being directed to make a conscious, rational commitment to God.

We are also to love God with all our soul. Loving God with our soul means to love Him with our entire being. It had the original meaning of “breath” and came to be a general term for life.

We are also to love God with all our strength. The Hebrew word translated “strength” means “very much or greatly.” The Hebrew term was translated by the LXX with the Greek term meaning “power.” This third term is most likely used to intensify the other two terms.

This exhortation to love God with all of our heart, soul and strength is referred to by Jesus as the greatest commandment (**Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27**).

God in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** has provided us an action plan when facing monumental tasks beyond our strength and abilities, such as parenting. And what according to this plan is our first action. Our first action, according to **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**, is this: to make sure that we as those chosen of God are wholly devoted to Him and love Him supremely. So how will we know if we are, in fact, doing this? It is really very simple. And this leads us to Action 2.

Actions 2: Making sure that we are devoted to God’s Word (Deuteronomy 6:6) Let me read for you **Deuteronomy 6:6**, **“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.”** If we love God we will be devoted to His words. And if we are not devoted to His words, then the truth is that we do not love God even in spite of what we might say or think. So let us now take a closer look at this verse.

When Moses refers to “**these words**,” he is certainly referring to all the words that were written in the Book of Deuteronomy. But even though this is true, we can easily apply what Moses said here about “these words” to all the words in the whole of the Bible.

And what did Moses mean when he told the Israelites that those words would be on their “**heart**?” We have already concluded that “**heart**” is not referring to the seat of the emotions, but to the seat of the intellect. Therefore, when Moses spoke of these words being on their heart, he was speaking about these words being continually reflected in all their conscious thoughts.

And why would this be? It would be this way because those who love God and who therefore want to be obedient to Him will seek to conform their lives to His words as an expression of their love for Him. What did Jesus say to His disciples in **John 14:15**? “**If you love me, you will keep my commandments.**” And of course this would require that His words would be on our hearts or continually reflected on in all our conscious thoughts so that we might know what the Lord would want us to be or do in any specific situation. And this leads us to the third action spelled out for us in God’s action plan in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**.

Not only are we to make sure that we love God supremely. Not only are we to make sure that we are devoted to His words. But there is something else.

Action 3: Making sure that our love for God and His Word impacts the way we live (Deuteronomy 6:7-9) It was not enough for the nation of Israel to think that they would find success in the Promised Land by simply thinking that they loved God and His Word. They needed to manifest the truth of what they said by the way they lived.

And the same thing is true for us as well. If I was to poll you today and was to ask you, do you love God and are you devoted to His Word, I would think that most of you would say absolutely! But saying it does not make it true, does it? In fact, the only way for us to know if we, in fact, love the Lord supremely and are, in fact, devoted to His word is if our love for God and our devotion to His Word impacts the way we are living. And how will our love for God and our devotion to His Word impact the way we are living? First of all ...

First of all, if we love the Lord and His Word, it will impact our communication (Deuteronomy 6:7). What does **Matthew 12:34** tell us? **“For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.”** People who say that they love God and are committed to His Word and who continue to use curse words, who continue to engage in filthy language and course jesting are just fooling themselves.

But our love for God and for His Word should not only impact what we choose not to say, it should also impact what we do say. And nowhere should that be more evident than when we are communicating the truths of God’s Word to our children, and I believe Moses makes this point very well for us in **Deuteronomy 6:7.**

Let me read this verse for you. **“You shall teach them [the words that he was now commanding them] diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”**

If we love the Lord with all our heart, soul and might and are, in fact, devoted to His Word, we will certainly find ourselves passing His truths to our children. And doesn’t this make sense?

There is no one more accessible to us than our children when they are living at home. There is no one that is more receptive to us than our children when they are living at home. And there is no one more in need of us than our children when they are living at home.

Therefore, if we truly love the Lord and are truly devoted to His Word, what will we find ourselves doing? We will find ourselves teaching the truths of God’s Word to our children when we are sitting with them in our house, when we are walking with them by the way, when we lie down and when we rise up. This is not something that we might find ourselves doing, but this is something, based on the words of Moses, that we will find ourselves doing.

Are you doing this? Has your love for the Lord and your devotion to His Word impacted you and your communication with your children in this way? Hopefully the answer is yes, and if it isn’t, then this needs to change. And how will this change? It will change when we get our heart right with God and with His Word, because if you do, you will very naturally

communicate with your children. Our efforts may not be very eloquent, but our effort will be there.

But Moses does not stop with simply talking about how our love for the Lord and our devotion to His Word should impact our communication with our children.

If we love the Lord and His Word it will impact our actions (Deuteronomy 6:8-9). Let me read for you **Deuteronomy 6:8-9. “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. (9) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”** So, what exactly is Moses talking about here when he is using these verses?

Did Moses actually want the Israelites to somehow literally bind the Scriptures on their hands and on their foreheads? Did Moses really want them to literally write the Scriptures on the doorposts of their houses and on their city gates? Though this is possible, as many Jews today in modern Israel actually still do it, certainly is not very likely.

Rather, I believe, that we need to understand these words figuratively. In support of this let me read for you **Proverbs 3:3. “Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.”** Obviously the writer of this Proverb did not mean that we should literally bind kindness and truth around our necks or write them on the tablet of our hearts. This, of course, would be impossible. Therefore we would have to conclude that he was speaking figuratively. In other words, he simply wants us to display them before men in the way we choose to live our lives. And this is how we need to understand the words of Moses in **Deuteronomy 6:8-9.**

If we truly love God and are devoted to His Word, then this love and devotion will display itself in our personal lives in the way we use our hands and use our eyes, in other words, as we bind the truths of God’s Word as a sign on our hands and on our foreheads.

If we truly love God and are devoted to His Word, then this love and devotion will display itself in our families, in other words, as we write the truths of God’s Word on the doorposts of our homes.

If we truly love God and are devoted to His Word, then this love and devotion will display itself in all our interactions in our community, in other words, as we write the truths of God's Word on the gates of our cities.

We are not here primarily to equip our children to make a living or to have successful careers or to enjoy the so-called good life. We as parents are here to help our children enter into the blessedness that comes to those who have learned to love and serve the Lord. And this is not an easy task. But it is by the grace of God a doable task, and the odds of achieving success are increased greatly if we would simply follow the action plan that God outlined for the nation of Israel in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**.

So in light of this, May God give us the grace as parents to display our love for God and our devotion to His Word in such a way that we might provide a path for our children to follow.