

3. The Biblical Foundation for Teaching Values

A key to the development of any family is the process by which a family communicates its values to the next generation. God used Moses to give a key summary of the process for passing on values to the next generation in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Those verses say, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

First, we see that a godly family communicates what is the basis for spiritual life in that family. In order for our family to have a strong spiritual life, we must choose to make the Lord our God. Today, the world has many gods – money, power, pleasure, success, education, idols and many other things that are the most important thing to the various families of the world. However, we see that if we are going to effectively teach values to our family that we must make Jesus Christ the center of our family and not let anything else become more important so that it becomes the god that really leads our family.

Second, we see that a godly family communicates what is important to the parents by example. If we are going to develop godly values (what is important to us) in our family, we make the choice to love the Lord with our whole heart, soul and strength. Here, we see that our heart or our inner man (human spirit) is where we begin. Children quickly learn what values are important to us as parents by the example that we provide as parents. If our words say that something is important to us but our actions do not agree, children will quickly learn from our example what is really important to us. That is why an angry parent will develop angry children and a thankful parent will develop thankful children. Our children will become what we are.

Third, we see that a godly family must have a value system that influences our heart, our mind, our emotions and our will because that will determine our actions. What is important to us in our heart will determine our character. If we are regularly yielding our lives to the Lord so that He is working in our hearts, we will develop godly character. This means that the things that are important to the Lord are the things that are becoming important to us. This will give us a desire to please the Lord and bring honor to His name in all that we do.

What is important to us in our mind, emotions and will determine how we think, feel and make choices. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” We renew and transform our minds as we think and talk about the Word of God. 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” We become motivated by love instead of fear as we take root in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7) and in the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19). We

carry out the will of God as we yield our will to Him. Christ gave us the example when He said in Matthew 26:39b, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

When it is important to us to please the Lord and carry out His will, that attitude will determine our actions. We will look for opportunities to spend time with others who will equip us and our family to serve the Lord. We will ask these other individuals to show us how to serve the Lord effectively (develop effective ministry skills). Then we will look for opportunities to serve the Lord as a family and pray that the Lord will give us boldness to speak for Him. We will follow the example of the early Christians in Acts 4:29 where they prayed, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.” As we develop effective ministry skills as a family and pray for boldness, the Lord will work in our lives and then through our lives.

Fourth, we see that a godly family must have the Word of God in their hearts and not just their heads. Here, we see the difference between knowing the Word of God and practicing the Word of God. We memorize and meditate on the Word of God as a family to learn how to avoid sin. Psalm 119:11 says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!” We can memorize the Word but we will not have it in our hearts unless we meditate on it. Joshua 1:8 says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” As we think about the Word of God in our hearts, then we pray and ask the Lord to give us His strength to carry out the things that He tells us to do in order to be obedient to Him.

Fifth, we see that a godly family teaches those values to their children. It is interesting that the first four things primarily are the values of the parents. As we come to this point, we see how we are to communicate these same values to our children. Here, we see that we are to teach to our children the things that are important to us. We teach in two ways. We teach the Word of God by helping our children to learn what the Word of God means. Then, we help them to really understand what it means by showing them through our attitudes and actions. Only as we teach by example where our attitudes and our actions agree with our words will our children begin to make these same things important to them in their lives.

Sixth, we see that a godly family looks for teachable moments. Deuteronomy 6:7 says that we are to teach our children as we sit in our house and as we go about our activities throughout the day. We are also to help our children learn to think about the Word of God as they prepare to go to sleep at night. Then, we are to help our children learn to think about the Word of God as they begin their day each morning. Here, we see that we are to help them learn how to apply the Word of God to their lives throughout the day. We do this as we share Biblical principles with them, as we answer their questions and as we help them to think and apply the Word to the situations that they face each day.

Seventh, we see that a godly family helps those values to become a part of their actions. Verse 8a says, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand...” We show our children how to put the Word of God into practice in their daily lives by example. As they see how we apply the Word of God in our own lives, they will learn to do the same. Paul said the same thing to his spiritual children when he said in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” People learn to follow the Lord by following the Lord’s people. In the same way, our children learn to follow the Lord as they observe our lives and see that we are following the Lord.

Eighth, we see that a godly family helps those values to become a part of their thoughts. Verse 8b says, “...they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” There are five main ways that children or adults learn the Word of God: hearing, reading, studying, memorizing and meditating. Children learn what God says as we read the Bible to them long before they can even begin to read for themselves so we need to read the Bible to them from the time that they are born. We can also help them begin to memorize the Word long before they can read. However, as they grow we also want to show them the importance of reading and studying the Word of God by our example. Then, we want to help them learn to meditate on the Word by asking them questions about what we are learning together.

Ninth, we see that a godly family makes those values clear in their home. Verse 9 says, “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Here, we see that we help children to know and remember the instructions of the Lord by having Bible verses posted in various parts of the house so that they are a constant reminder to the entire family. However, we must do more than just write and post them in the house. We take opportunities to discuss with our children how we can all put these verses into practice in our lives. We help our children learn to apply the Word both by their actions in the home and in their actions when they are away from home. In this way, they are learning to apply the Word of God to daily living throughout the day and wherever they go during the day.

Our families will have a real impact on the people who live around us as others see that the love of Christ is controlling our lives. All people are either driven by their fears or they are led by the love of Christ. That is why we are told to take root in Christ and His love. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” Then, Ephesians 3:17-19 says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” We teach our families to love as we show the love of Christ in our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show others how the love of Christ can transform their lives by your example.