

Teach Your Children!

Text: Deuteronomy 6:7

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Deuteronomy 6 follows the restatement of the Ten Commandments in chapter 5. It is a chapter brimming with divine instruction, preparing Israel to enter the Promised Land. At its heart is the call to covenant obedience and love for God: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:4-5). The passage then moves swiftly to how this love for God is to be cultivated and passed on: “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children...” (Deut. 6:6-7).

Our focus is verse 7: “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” This verse is not a *promise* like Acts 2:39 (“For the promise is unto you, and to your children”), nor a *godly example* like Genesis 18:19 concerning Abraham. It is not a *warning* like that in the sad history of Eli and his sons. It is a direct *command*.

We will consider three questions drawn from the text:

Who is to teach?

How are they to teach?

When are they to teach?

Who?

The obvious answer is *the church*. Jesus said to Peter, “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15). That instruction applies to all those who follow in apostolic teaching and preaching. Faithful preaching of God’s Word feeds children and adults alike. Preaching is not just for adults. It is the chief means of grace, the primary way Christ rules and speaks to His church (Rom. 10:14-17).

Children are incredibly privileged when they are raised under such preaching. Most children on the planet are brought up under Paganism. Many in Western nations are not even brought to church. Many who are, hear false doctrine—salvation by works or by an act of man’s will. And then there are the churches where children are removed during the sermon. In some churches, children up

to age eleven are excluded from the worship service before the preaching begins.

The tragedy is compounded when adults—often women—are also removed. The voice of Christ is silenced in their ears, week after week. “My people love to have it so” (Jer. 5:31). This is spiritual delusion. The devil has pulled off a masterstroke.

And yet, Deuteronomy 6:7 does not speak of the church, but *the parent*. “Thou” is singular. It refers to the *father*, and by extension, the *mother* too. This responsibility is not delegated entirely to the church. Deuteronomy emphasizes this throughout: “Teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons” (Deut. 4:9). “Ye shall teach them your children” (Deut. 11:19). Our Baptism Form echoes this: “Do you promise and intend to see these children... instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine...?” It is not one without the other. Parents may not pass this off onto the church. Nor may they excuse forsaking the church, saying, “I’ll teach them myself.” The church and the home are meant to function *together*. Parents need the church; the church supports parents. One cannot replace the other.

Moreover, it is not one parent only. Both father and mother are called. Often, it is the father who shirks his duty—too tired, too awkward with children, or convinced that “it’s women’s work.” But this leaves the mother run ragged and overwhelmed. Children—especially sons—will disregard a mother who is not backed by a faithful father.

Parents and church must function cooperatively, not competitively. The church instructs and encourages parents. Parents bring children to both services, participate in catechism, and support—not criticise—the church before their children.

How?

Parents teach children in many ways. First, by *example*—a life of visible godliness. Children can read their parents well. They observe what is real and what is performative.

Then comes *marital example*. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church” (Eph. 5:25). “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). If a child says, “I never want a marriage like my parents had,” something has gone terribly wrong.

Then there is *discipline* – necessary, loving correction. “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov. 13:24). “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19:18).

Further, some teach by *Christian schooling*, under the principle of *in loco parentis* – teachers assisting parents. Others *homeschool*, usually the mother. Though difficult, it is often fruitful.

Daily *family worship* is vital. Devotions at the table – scripture reading, brief discussion, prayer, and psalm singing – set the tone. Parents can also teach through *books*: solid Reformed literature, suited to their children’s age. A small personal library is a gift that keeps giving.

Yet, while all of these are biblical and commendable, *our text highlights one key method above all others*: “Thou shalt... *talk* of them.” That is, *conversation*. Normal, loving, daily speech. This presumes that parents *talk* with their children. In some homes, this barely happens. But if there is no relationship, there will be no discipleship. Conversation is central. And what sort of speech? Not only about school or weather, but *about God*.

“These words... shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children” (Deut. 6:6–7). The words must be in your heart first. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). If the Word is in your heart, you will speak of it. You speak of *God the Father, Christ the Redeemer, the Spirit and His work, the cross, forgiveness, sin, and salvation*. You do so wisely and age-appropriately. Children enjoy conversation when it is gentle, thoughtful, and suited to them. They do not appreciate being scolded with Scripture, or dragged into arguments. “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath” (Eph. 6:4), “lest they be discouraged” (Col. 3:21).

The Hebrew word translated “teach diligently” suggests *sharpening* – driving truth into the soul. This is done *with love*, and *in dependence upon the Spirit*.

When?

“When thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” (Deut. 6:7) This verse covers the entire rhythm of the day. *Sitting*: Mealtimes, family time, conversations in the living room. *Walking*: On the way to school, errands, walks together. *Lying down*: Bedtime. A perfect moment for reflection and prayer. *Rising up*: Morning routines, starting the day with perspective.

These four postures mean: *every day, throughout the day*. This teaching is not reserved for formal study. It is continual, informal, and natural.

And when those opportunities arise, we call them “teaching moments.” On a holiday, your child sees a Pagan idol: “Why does that god have an elephant’s head?” And you respond: “The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). Then you speak of the Trinity. Your family enjoys abundance. You say: “Beware lest thou forget the LORD” (Deut. 6:12). A moment of thankfulness and humility. Your child is tempted by peers: “Everyone does this.” And you say: “Ye shall not go after other gods... For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you” (Deut. 6:14–15). These moments are powerful. They show that God’s Word is *relevant, daily, and life-shaping*.

And then comes the question your child might ask, as anticipated in Deuteronomy 6:20–23: “What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments...?” And you say: “We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out... that He might bring us in” (vv. 21–23). You speak of *deliverance from sin, and entrance into life through Christ*.

This conversational method has many advantages: It is *constant* – not limited to Sundays. It is *informal* – no schedule required. It is *natural* – from a loving parent’s heart to the child’s ear.

If the Word is in your heart, it will be in your mouth. Just as a football fan speaks excitedly about his team’s win, the Christian speaks of the Redeemer. And when a child sees this love, it plants a desire: “My parents love the Lord. I love my parents. I want to love the Lord too.”

Deuteronomy 6:7 calls for deliberate, loving, Word-filled parenting. It requires presence, conversation, devotion, and dependence on God. Let us repent of past neglect, renew our commitment, and pray for grace. Children are a heritage from the Lord – and they are listening.

Our Father in heaven, we pray for Thy grace upon us to learn better of the good things that our own parents taught us. Help us, Lord God to obey this difficult calling too, for Thy word is not easy for us sinners. And we pray, Lord God, that Thou would forgive us our own sins and weaknesses in this area, and forgive too our own parents who are in the Lord, but like everyone else, failed to walk perfectly. We have confidence, Lord, that there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. Grant to us Thy strength and power through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.