

What does God Expect of Parents and Grandparents

Purpose:

1. To clarify Biblical teachings on what God wants a parent and grandparent to be about.
2. To identify Bible passages which spell this out.
3. To help family leaders see the importance of what they are or could be doing as instruments of impacting future generations.

Scripture references: Deuteronomy 6; Psalm 78:1-8; Proverbs chapters 1-7, 22:6; Malachi 4:6; Ephesians 6:4; Ephesians 6:18-20.

What are the questions to ask to get the right answers?

Before finding the questions perhaps we need to identify our assumptions. Most of us have grown up in churches where there was little emphasis on the actual calling of parents and grandparents. It was assumed these people are doing their job and often left at that. Parents and grandparents are thought of something that was just there like the air we breathe or the sun which we count on. Surely my father knew he was an important person in my life. I also felt my role as a key part of my children's lives. But guess what? I never really dug into the Bible to find out what God was expecting me to do as a parent or as a grandparent. Does the Bible say anything about the calling or we can call it the ministry of family leaders?

If we want to find out why we are in this course in the first place, we need to understand how vital we are in God's order of things. Only then will we have a solid reason for going forward with this course. Well, to tell you the truth, I have been surprised myself to discover what the Bible has to say. For years, I never thought about



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it that much and never inquired into it either. What I did run into is that in many cases family leaders have pretty much handed over to pastors and teachers in the church building the job of giving them Christian instruction. Taken that way, it amounts to relieving family leaders of any personal responsibility for passing on the faith or even getting their children prepared to meet the world.

Discussion Questions: Have I ever been told what my responsibility before God is as a family leader? How much has that been emphasized? Who might I be counting on to help my child mature? In a society like ours with well-trained pastors, teachers, doctors, etc. how easy is it to start thinking they know better so they have more to give my kids than I do?

What mandate did Moses give to the parents before they entered the Promise Land?

So what is there about this in the Bible anyway? The first real instructions to be found pointing to parents is said by Moses in Deuteronomy 6 as the Israelites are to cross over the Jordan into the Promise Land. That land is full of people who are idol worshippers. This means there is a real danger that these Israelite children and their children after them will not know what God has done for their people by delivering them out of the hand of the Egyptians. Or how God took care of them for forty years in the wilderness. They might soon forget what God promised Abraham, their forefather, how God was blessing them as a people and through them would bless all people. How God had made a covenant with them and given them the ten commandments. The children could lose track of who God is for them and all the promises, the decrees and commandments he has given them. So, who is going to keep that from happening?



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According to Moses as we read Deuteronomy 6:1-9 it will be the parents. **(Someone read this)**. They will be the ones to keep the children fearing and reverencing the Lord. They will instruct the children in what God has given them to know and to do. And they are to be sharing all this with their children every day, in the morning, at night, on the road and wherever. Many emblems and signs are to be created to remind the parents to keep handing over to and training their children in all that God has done and commanded. Nothing is to be taken for granted. All of this is to be very intentional and persistent.

It is important to read this whole chapter 6 if we want to come to grips with what parents are to be about. No one is there to influence the children like the parents are. No one is with them every day. The children will be watching their parents and what they hear and witness will most impact their lives. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. Why? Because some people their children meet up with will have deceiving messages and habits that will lure them into unbelief. It could become very tempting for the children to sidestep God and then get faked out. So the faith of the parents must be passed on.

Discussion Questions: What did Moses ask parents to do as they entered the Promise Land? What is it about parents (and grandparents) that makes them such key people to be doing what Moses said? In what important ways have your parents and grandparents affected your lives positively or perhaps negatively without wanting to?

What was Martin Luther's take on the importance of Deuteronomy 6?

First of all let us remember Martin Luther wrote the Small Catechism for parents to have in instructing their children. Many parents had big sheets hung on their houses walls to

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drive home what was said in the Catechism. Hear what Martin Luther says about Deuteronomy 6 in his Preface to the Large Catechism. “If this were not enough to admonish us to read the Catechism daily, there is God’s command. That alone should be incentive enough. Deuteronomy 6:7,8 solemnly enjoins that we should always meditate upon his precepts whether sitting, walking, standing, lying down, or rising, and keep them before our eyes and in our hands as a constant token and sign. Certainly, God did not require and command this so solemnly without reason. He knows our danger and need. He knows the constant and furious attacks and assaults of the devil. So, he wishes to warn, equip, and protect us against them with good “armor” against their “flaming darts,” and with a good antidote against their evil infection and poison. O what mad, senseless fools we are! We must ever live and dwell in the midst of such mighty enemies as the devils, and yet we despise our weapons and armor, too lazy to give them a thought!”

Discussion Questions: If we are not too lazy to be doing what Moses ordered us to do, how might we be fulfilling these words here in our modern life? What would we need to be doing to keep our children from being misled by the devil?

How is a congregation to function if the most fruitful outcomes are going to be the result?

Now here we see Moses and Martin Luther were facing the same challenge in a sense. They were working hard themselves. But as Moses’ father-in-law Jethro pointed out to Moses in Exodus 18, “You need to delegate much of this work of judges out to others. Otherwise, you are going to wear yourself out.” Martin Luther also saw that parents in their homes could do much of the work of teaching their children the faith. But he

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realized they did not have the resources to do a good job with this. Again, so he wrote the Small Catechism for them to use. He understood he had to spread the work around and that by doing so the work of a congregation would be much more rooted and fruitful.

A number of churches have the same problem. The pastor or staff is asked to carry too much of the load. That is not the way the Christian church is to operate. Each person has a ministry. No player is sitting on the bench. All are out on the field doing their part. The idea expressed in the first session is that a church can only function at full capacity if everyone is mobilized and doing their part. That is what builds up the body of Christ, the life of the community of faith. A major part of what is going on in any congregation is what family leaders are teaching, sharing, modeling and praying in their homes. This is where the rubber meets the road. It also is where God wants to work. Lay people can become encouraged and excited when they see what God is doing in their own families. Especially when family leaders become faithful seed planters. In session ten we will be discussing the ministry children have. They also have a big part in this. God be praised.

Discussion Questions: How important in the life of a congregation is spreading out the responsibilities? How much of what is really happening in a congregation is happening in the homes, not in the church building? Who do you think has the most influence of a child's future faith life and staying out of trouble, the child's family leaders or pastors and the church's staff?

What is the new point that Psalm 78 makes?



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We now ask: Was this admonition to parents in Deuteronomy 6 only to be taken seriously in Moses' time? A similar message is commanded centuries later in Psalm 78:1-8. There is much God has said even in parables and stories that one's ancestors are to be passing on to the next generation and must then continue to be the legacy of even succeeding generations. This means both parents and grandparents are to make sure their children and then their children hear and embrace what messages need to be passed onto them. This is not a suggestion to family leaders but a mandate. No one sees God so what God has said and done must be articulated by word of mouth and by lives that speak with integrity to that.

Discussion Questions: How much of a range to stories, parables, promises, warning, commandments, prayers, messages of repentance and salvation must be implanted in the lives of children if all that is going to actually be passed down to further generations?

What is to be taught by fathers (and mothers) if children are to grow up wise and avoid many of the hurtful traps and connivers they will encounter in their lives?

What is this message to include? King Solomon helps us here if we read Proverbs, chapters 1-7. Children are simple minded and will do foolish things. Therefore they must be instructed in the value of wisdom, of not being lured into sinful and foolish ways of living. They must be wised up if they are going to live godly lives in the world. All of this is being said by a father who is exhorting his children to value wisdom above gold and silver. Fathers have a crucial role in preparing their children for life on this earth.



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Discussion Questions: Who is responsible for making sure children are not unnecessarily vulnerable and simple minded? What do you see can be done to keep children safe and wise even in their adult lives? Do you see yourself prepared to carry out what is being asked for here? What is it about the book of Proverbs that makes it a valuable resource for family leaders? (Here read Proverbs 4). Notice here the father speaking has learned from his father so in reality we have the influence here of the grandfather on his grandson.

Are the Old Testament teachings brought out also in the New Testament?

So, once we move to the New Testament, do priorities change? Are parents and grandparents now off the hook and replaced by pastors and teachers? By no means! Ephesians 6:4 tells parents and especially fathers three truths that are extremely important. First, parents must find ways of not reacting emotionally with their children. This will harm the relationship they are seeking to build with their children. When they provoke their children to anger and seek to control them with an iron hand, they forfeit the nurturing influence they can have upon them. Still, they are not to be permissive and let the children find their own way. For secondly, they are to model what it takes to live the Christian life and the discipline required. This means they are to correct their children and stand to be corrected themselves. For Christian living cannot take place realistically where no discipline is required. All this will mean attitudes and sins will be addressed yet with gentleness and understanding. God's love and forgiveness will be shared. There will be times the parent needs to ask for forgiveness and other times when the child will need to ask their parents for forgiveness. Thirdly, all of this will be based on all the truths with which they are to instruct their children in the Christian faith. We learn from Moses that such education will best happen on a daily basis.

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We have to ask what Jesus is telling us when he said in Matthew 10:16. “See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise (shrewd) as serpents and innocent as doves.” Obviously, children are not that wise so who but their parents and grandparents are going to prepare them to meet up with the deceptive world of unbelief. This includes fending off the wolves they meet.

Discussion Question: Which of the three points of Ephesians 6:4 do you think is most important: 1 Not provoking to anger. 2. Living a disciplined life. 3. Teaching the children what the faith is all about? Do you see you have all the material you need to pass on the faith? What would be helpful to have? How can we train our children to be wise and at times shrewd? What is your experience with this?

Summary:

This course is going to help you think more about these relevant questions and what can be learned from the Bible and others that will help us delve further into this. As we go on, we want to emphasize the Bible asks family leaders to do three things.

- 1. Pass on who God is and what God has done and is for us today.**
- 2. Equip the children with wisdom.**
- 3. Pray for one’s offspring. (We will talk about this later).**

Closing Prayer: Suggestions

1. Here a pray-er can pray for what is being taught here in the Bible and for this course to equip those present for their home ministries.
2. Praises and requests coming out of the discussions in the group.
3. The need for forgiveness in overlooking these mandates.
4. For all of us in this class to see more of who we can be and what we can do for the youth.