

Deuteronomy 6:4–9.

Let's look at what we can learn from this passage:

1. **See the big picture – Who's it all about?** (vs 4-5) It starts with God and ends with God.

Most parents can't give their children a lavish inheritance, but every parent will leave a personal legacy.

With the excess that surrounds most of us, a lot of families get sidetracked from what really matters. We become so preoccupied with giving kids an inheritance that we forget the significance of leaving a legacy. What we give to our children or do for our children is not as important as what we leave in our children. The goal at the end of the day is not to make your kids happy as they go to bed.

We have to be careful how we define giving our kids happiness. If it's defined by what we can give to them and do for them we'll settle for something far less significant than what God has designed them for and what He has designed for them.

We are doing our kids a disservice if they enjoy the benefits and prosperity of a better lifestyle, and become experientially rich but never grow relationally and spiritually.

We have to help our kids see the big picture. Just like we want to finish well, we should want our kids to finish well. Our desire shouldn't be that they "act right" as kids to make us look good as parents. To see the big picture, we have to begin with the end in mind. We are preparing our kids for when they don't have us any more. To really help your kids endure, try to find ways to encourage them in what they're doing *today*. Help them understand that what they do today is important, because it prepares them for tomorrow.

2. **Guard their heart and your relationship with your child.**

This is everything. If you don't have your children's hearts, you don't have anything.

The Bible is clear that we should "Above all else guard the heart for it is the wellspring of life." (Proverbs 4:23) I believe in firm discipline. I also believe in extending much grace. More than

anything, however, the parent should learn to know, protect and shape the heart of their child.

We don't do this when we spoil them. You want to spoil a child?

- Give them everything they want
- Never tell them no
- Disagree with your spouse in front of them about discipline
- Let them believe they are more important to you than your spouse
- Try to make every moment the greatest moment
- Let them believe the world revolves around them
- Take their side every time against someone else
- Make excuses for them
- Let them talk to you however they want

*Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

*Proverbs 29:15: The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*

*Proverbs 29:17: Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul.*

The time to gain control over a child's actions are when they are young and then a gradual release of authority is given to them, as they get older. Too many parents allow too much freedom early and then try to get control back when the child tries to be an independent teenager. It should be the opposite.

What should we consider when it comes to discipline? Here's some thoughts:

- make sure rules are established and understood
- don't discipline out of anger
- be consistent
- understand that some disciplines work better on different kids
- don't say you're going to discipline and then not discipline
- don't argue about discipline in front of the child
- discipline with results in mind - Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."
- most importantly remember that discipline should never teach

a child he or she is unloved. Actually, if done right, it should reinforce the love a parent has for the child.

It's so easy for us to make the rules more important than the relationship. If we are not careful, disappointment in our kids' behavior can be translated into their hearts as rejection. The truth is our children will always challenge the rules and debate our reasoning, but we should strive to parent in a way that they can never question how much we love them.

It is natural and normal for kids to challenge the process. As they move toward independence, it will happen more frequently. That's the problem with rules – you can always debate their rationale, but you can't debate a trusted relationship. Unfortunately, most of us parents are better skilled at fighting to win the argument than we are at fighting to win the heart.

Control works through rules.

Influence works through relationships.

If the focus is only on the rules in the teen years, you can lose the relationship.

If you have a solid relationship, you will likely end up with influence over the rules.

Build the kind of relationship with your children that will help them want more of what you value. Jesus did that with the disciples. Your children are more likely to want to know the Christ you love if they learn first to love you.

**3. It has to be real to you before it can be real to them.** (vs 6)

This is not merely a "Sunday faith." How is your faith? Are you growing? You can't lead your family somewhere you aren't or haven't been.

When it comes to character and faith, your kids are *watching* you in a way they might not watch you in other pursuits. When it comes to spiritual and character formation, your journey impacts them deeply. If you want it to be in them, it needs to be in you.

Your kids already have a front-row seat to your life. The question is, what are they watching? Is it just show? Or is it a real-life adventure where they see courage and passion to overcome

personal obstacles?

Do your kids see you struggle with finding answers,  
that you don't always know what to do,  
as a real person with real problems,  
that you have fears,  
admit when you are wrong,  
fight for your convictions,  
that you're trusting God with your life even in the midst of trials  
and conflict,  
that you have a savior because you need a savior,  
that the Savior you have is also your Lord?

If what you are teaching your kids isn't true in your own  
personal life, it won't be true in theirs and your teaching will hold  
no weight.

4. **The rhythm is going to get you. (vs 7)** If you are counting on  
the church to influence your children, they only have about 40  
hours a year to do so. However, parents have about 3,000 hours  
a year to influence their children. Clearly, the church can never  
do the job parents can do.

When you create a rhythm you establish priorities. Parenting is  
hard work. Don't try it without a plan. If you do not know where  
you want to go you probably will not get there. It's amazing  
how we tend to plan for everything in life, but seldom for our  
parenting. We make plans to perfect a skill or progress our  
career, but nothing to help us grow as parents. If you want to be  
a great parent, you must be intentional about that role. Have an  
overall plan for your parenting and an individual plan for each  
child, depending on their needs at the time. We have to continue  
to fine tune that plan as our kids grow.

Some would make the case that it is important for families to  
spend an enormous amount of time together, no matter what  
they are doing. Others would argue that the issue is not how  
much time you spend together, but how you spend that time.  
The rhythm of your family probably won't be the same as your  
neighbors or friends. The key is that you are creating one for  
yourself not following someone else's script. The point should be  
that we take time and we make the most of the time. What you

make time for ultimately shapes what your child will value.

Here's the thinking: Every family already has a rhythm. Yours does. Mine does. And what happens in that rhythm becomes 'normal' for the kids. What are we doing in our rhythm that builds relationships and memories with our kids?

Eat more meals together.

Create a weekly family night.

Pick up a camera more often.

Schedule a few weekend trips or hikes.

Don't stress as much over the messy house.

Become interested in activities they are interested in.

Be home more.

What traditions are we building with our kids, or are we even building any?

Traditions can bring security, build a bond, remind us that everything is not always about "me", communicates the value of the family.

An even greater question may be, how does God get worked into the rhythm? See, sometimes God is someone who shows up on Sunday, but is absent the rest of the week. Not because he's not important, but because he doesn't have a role in our daily rhythm.

The younger your kids are, the easier it is to create a rhythm. There's craft time, play time, nap time, meal time...you get the picture. Life is so structured, so it's easier to regularly incorporate faith into the rhythm of life. But the older they get, the more creative and purposed you have to be about creating a rhythm. This is where the spontaneous conversations become important. Bring God into your car rides and family dinners when you have them. Don't be afraid to ask questions before they go to bed. Schedule times if you need to.

Side note: Remember to turn off the distractions in order to be fully focused. When distraction is interfering with rhythm it all just becomes noise.

5. **Widen the circle.** Hebrew parents didn't try to raise their children alone. They had the help of the entire community. It does take a village. Children who have mentors and coaches outside their family are more likely to lead healthy and successful lives.

In a culture where community is not automatic and there are limited role models, parents should become intentional about finding spiritual leaders and mentors for their kids. Every son and daughter needs other adults in their lives who will say things that reflect what a parent would say. One of the smartest things moms and dads can do is to participate in a church where they can find the right kind of adult influences for their kids.

Research shows that teens who had at least one adult from church make a significant time investment in their lives ...were more likely to keep attending church. More of those who stayed in church—by a margin of 46 percent to 28 percent—said five or more adults at church had invested time with them personally and spiritually.

From the time they hit middle school, kids start moving away from home. They are not doing anything wrong; it's just the way they are made. They are becoming independent, and they begin redefining themselves through the eyes of other people who are not in their immediate family. The older they get, the more important it is for them to have other voices in their lives saying the same things but in a different way. Teenage sons and daughters need to have other voices speaking into their worlds.

Something powerful happens when you partner with other influences who have a purpose to instill a sense of mission into the heart of your children. You give them a different view of their place in the world and you transfer a different kind of passion to them that your family alone cannot give them. It doesn't mean that you as parents can't engage in this mission with them. You should attempt to let your kids see what God can do through your family, as well as leverage influences to show them what God can do through them personally.

Along with this, do ministry together. There's something powerful

about taking the time to serve together.

***Advice to new parents or planning to be parents:***

You'll never be prepared. You'll never be financially ready. You'll never know what you are doing. You'll be shocked how quickly your kids learn to be heathens.

But understand that children are children for a very short time. Enjoy these days. Have fun with your kids and do not wish these days away. Don't take these days for granted. One day they will be over.

Terrible twos are just the beginning. But you can make it through.

**Push through!**

**Be consistent**

**Keep loving**

**Experiment** – Use different discipline methods until you find one that works for whatever stage of life your child's in.

**Remember you are the adult** – Sometimes when the child is showing his or her worse side it is tempting to show yours. Keep your cool. Be mature. Handle these days firmly, but calmly. Remember you are modeling behavior for your child.

**Teach your child** – This phase can be a great opportunity to teach your child how to respond to disappointment and frustration.

**Don't be afraid to share your situation with others.** Often parents are embarrassed because of their children's behavior during this stage of life so they hide the struggle; not realizing that so many other parents experience the same with their children. The biggest surprise at this stage of your child's life may be when you discover you are not unique in this struggle.