

GETHSEMANE EV. LUTH. CHURCH
DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9
SEPTEMBER 11, 2005

Theme: PUT GOD IN CHARGE OF YOUR FAMILY!

Dad's the boss of the family, right?! With good natured humor I remind my family of that fact from time to time. But once when I did that, the littlest Wilke informed me that wasn't quite true. Jesus is the boss of the family, he said with matter of fact innocence. He had me there. I could do nothing but humbly agree. Children are to respect the God given authority entrusted to their parents, but God is still to be the true king of every Christian home.

Many years ago Joshua called on the people of Israel to consider who was really in charge of their families. "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ...But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" - Joshua 24:15.

Joshua urgently called on the families of Israel to put the LORD back in charge of their families. Do we need to listen to his words today? Yes, as much as ever! One of the problems, even in Christian homes, is that everyone in the family wants to be in charge. Mom wants it her way, and sometimes isn't shy about challenging Dad's God-given leadership position over the family. Dad, in an effort to regain control, loses his temper and tries to rule with anger and threats. The kids learn clever ways to manipulate their parents to get what they want. The result is that things get all mixed up, confusion and chaos reign supreme, and the members of the family begin to head in all sorts of directions but the right one ... For every ship there has to be a captain. Whose been steering your family ship lately? Whose been giving the orders? Because our families are made up entirely of sinners, every Christian family gets off course at least once in awhile ... I pray, that with the help of God's Word today, every family of this congregation will take my youngest son's reminder to heart. May the Holy Spirit move you, more and more, to

PUT GOD IN CHARGE OF YOUR FAMILY!

I. By Following His Word

II. By Teaching His Word to Your Children

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

I.

Every once in awhile Mom makes an appointment at Wal-Mart to get a family portrait. She does her best to make sure everyone has nice clothes, clean faces, and combed hair. Not an easy job for a predominately male family. The photographer does his or her best to make sure everyone is smiling, looking at the camera with eyes open, as well as minimizing the amount of glare that emanates from the forehead of one of the family members. (No comment from the peanut gallery, please.) Anyway, a few weeks later we get a call to pick up our packet of pictures. And, for better or worse, there we all are, in colorful glossy print. Well, not quite all of us. One thing you don't see in the picture is the presence of God. But just because we can't see Him doesn't mean He's not there. That's one reason we have to talk about Him so much. God is not just an idea that we think about from time to time. He's a personal, living being who makes plans for us, gives us blessings, and leads us in the way He wants us to go. No, God is not there in the family portrait, but lets all recognize that He's there in the day-to-day life of your household.

- And make no mistake, my friends, God wants to be in charge. To the families of Israel He says: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

God was laying claim to their loyalty and love. They were to make Him the most important person in their lives. His orders were to be followed down to the last syllable, with the understanding that every Word of God was right and beneficial for them ... God sets very high standards for both the Christian individual as well as the Christian family. How do we measure up?

The command to love God above all things is not optional. God deserves it. God expects it. And we fail to do it. We put things ahead of God. When we put money or material things or personal pleasure or recreation ahead of God, these things, in effect, become our gods, determining for us how we use our time, our money, our abilities. Or if we put the way we think things should be, or the way we want to run our lives, before God, then we push God off the throne of our hearts, and claim the ruler ship that rightfully belongs to Him. Anyway you slice it, we end up in the same place. We fall into sin. We make ourselves guilty, guilty, guilty, and that brings down on our heads the penalty of death and the curse of hell.

But God not only reminds us of who is to be in charge, He also takes charge of all our sins and failures. We have not loved God with all of our hearts, but God loves us with all His heart. He put together a family health plan that deals head on with the damning sickness of sin. This health plan doesn't cost you a thing, but it cost God everything. It cost Him the life of His Son. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" - Isaiah 53:5. God declares our sins forgiven because of Jesus substitute death on the cross.

Then, through this amazing act of love, God wins back our loyalty. God plants Jesus' cross in the middle of our homes. The arms of Jesus' cross draw us close to God. The Holy Spirit applies Jesus' blood to our hearts and washes us clean of all our rebellion. He gives us a clean slate so that every morning we get another chance to let God be King over our hearts and our homes. The forgiveness Jesus won for us becomes the dominate force in our Christian homes. It heals our hearts when we as individuals in the family sin against God and one another. It changes our hearts so that we strive, with God's grace, to put Him first again.

But how do we put God in charge? By following His Word. By listening and doing what He says. - And He tells you plainly what He wants you to do in the Bible. But here's the challenge we face. The teachings of the Bible won't have any effect on your personal walk with God or on your home life if the family Bible is left on the shelf to collect dust. When Moses said, "These words which I command you today shall be in your heart," he was not making a wish. He was telling us that in order to know God's Word, in order for God's Word to have an impact on us, we have to learn and study God's Word.

Moses has a colorful way of making the point: "Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." God is not telling you to carve Bible passages on the front door of your house, or write the Ten Commandments on your wrist. He's telling you to let the Word of God influence every aspect of your life. When we drive our vehicles we pay attention to the signs to know what we need to do in any given situation. That's the way it is with God's Word. We need to pay attention to it and have it right in the forefront of our thinking and living at all times. - And remember who is directing us - it's the One Who suffered, and bled, and died, and was even damned for us. God calls us to follow His every Word because He loves us and wants to bless us. How blessed we will be when we stop and remember what our merciful God has said before speaking, or acting, or reacting.

II.

God comes to each adult and says. "Put me in charge of your life." - And when we embrace His leadership over our homes, that's when we're ready for the next step. God's takes charge of your family when He uses you parents to teach His Word to your children ...The words of Moses ring out to us: "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. " Let's be clear on where the responsibility falls. The Lord did not say, "You priests and prophets, you make sure that the children are taught." He lays the responsibility on the parents. It's a huge responsibility. But God equips and empowers you for the job. By using His Word for yourself, it gets you ready to teach your family. Here's a few goals that you can shoot for in the family ...

Show your children how Jesus fits into every part of their lives by talking about Him and His Word as much as possible throughout the day. Constantly remind them of how God's love surrounds them everyday.

It's a huge responsibility. But God equips you and empowers you for the job. By using His Word for yourself, it gets you ready to teach your family. Here's a few goals that you can shoot for in your family.

Help your children to examine with the Bible the TV shows they watch and the music they listen to. Teach them that your values come from God's Word, not from Hollywood or MTV.

When they are faced with a decision, big or small, always ask, "What do you think God says about this?" And then open your Bible together and find out

Show them the need to share God's Word with other people, and how God wants us to pray not only for ourselves but others.

Talk about the family church offering. How Jesus is worth the very best possible offering your family can give. Tell them God is in charge of the family checkbook. Teach them to budget their own money so that from early on they consider their offering to their Savior as top priority in their own personal budget.

When they disobey you and God, remember God expects you to discipline them. You need to correct them, not out of anger, but always out of love. Make it clear that what they did was wrong, but then be quick to apply the unconditional Gospel of God's love and forgiveness. Make sure they know that God's love for them and your love for them does not depend at all on their performance.

Never forget the importance of your own personal example. Your children watch your every move. It makes a far bigger impression on them when you not only tell them of the need to hear God's Word, but you show them by going yourself and taking the child with you.

Finally, make use of your church's Sunday School program. Also, prayerfully consider enrolling your children in our Day School. The Christian Day School makes the influence of God' Word a prominent part of every school day. If your child is enrolled in our school from Pre- K - 8th grade he or she will spend over 100,000 hours in a classroom where Jesus is in charge, and where He is the main subject.

God wants your child forever. Unfortunately, the devil wants him too. We can't afford to let the children down. They can't afford for us to become lazy or haphazard in the duty God has given. But we should not think that the final outcome depends on human effort. Is it your job to give your child faith? That's the job of the Holy Spirit. Parents, teachers, pastors do the work of

teaching, setting the example, maintaining discipline, but God handles the job of creating and preserving faith.

That's what makes the whole endeavor so promising. God is at work in all this. We can count on Him because He's so dependable. We can count on Him to forgive our failings as parents. We can count on Him to bless the spiritual training of our children. We can count on Him to keep us on the path of eternal life. He won't let us down. So let's take Him up on His offer. Let's put the LORD in charge of your family and mine. Amen.