

In Pursuit of God Honoring Parenting

Making Your Home All it was Meant to Be



Unit 1



Your Home as a School

A Place to Learn

TRUTH

by memory – Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (ESV)

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

in Bible –

Welcome to a new section of *The Journey*. During the next four weeks you will learn some useful principles for parenting by looking at how a Christian home is like a school, a hospital, a mission and a church.

If your stage of life doesn't involve parenting, you can still apply the truth and equipping found in these units. As a grandparent you could learn how to support your children as they experience the parenting years. If you hope to have children someday, this is an advantageous time for you to read the owner's manual (so to speak) *before* the children arrive! Actually, anyone who has a significant relationship with a child (uncle, aunt, caregiver, or teacher) can benefit from the principles taught in these units.

Be sure to make time in your week for daily personal worship. You can use the **PRAISE** approach to personal worship outlined below. As you read and study Scripture be sure to include the "S" of **PRAISE** – to summarize specific applications of the Bible for your life.

Pray First – **Read** the text – **Ask** Questions – **Interpret** in Context – **Summarize** applications – **Engage** with God

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Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – These verses form the introduction to a passage known as *The Shema* (pronounced shě-mah). It is so named because it begins the Hebrew word for “hear, listen”. The Shema follows a reiteration of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5 as a way to summarize and reinforce the importance of keeping them. The main intent of the Ten Commandments is summarized by the Great Commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5.

How does this passage apply to educating children?

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What does loving God have to do with educating children?

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How would you explain this passage to a group of children? What is the main point you would want to get across? What practical application could you make to their lives?

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Matthew 23:1-6 – In this passage Jesus compared the instruction of the Pharisees with their lifestyle and motives. [Note: The phrase, “*The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat...*” indicated Jesus’ acknowledgement of the Pharisees’ authority as contemporary teachers of the Law of Moses.]

What fault did Jesus find with the Pharisees?

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How might parents become guilty of the same failing? How would this affect their children?

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20 – These verses reveal Paul’s heart of devotion for the believers in Thessalonica. Verses 19-20 show an almost parental sort of pride and joy in them.

Notice that Paul wanted to spend more face to face time with these believers. Why was this such an urgent matter for him?

How might verses 19-20 be applied to parenting?

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to summarize –

What’s the difference between a house and a home? A high quality house is built with high quality materials; a high quality home is built with high quality relationships. A quality house is built by skilled workmanship; a quality home is built by skillful leadership. A house is built on a construction site; a home is built on personal interactions. Building a house is all about deadlines; but building a home is all about patience. A house is built to have a specific value; but a home is built upon its values.

Parent, is your home becoming all it was meant to be? If your walls could comment on what goes on in your home, would they remark on the quality of the relationships and interactions? Would they describe the patience and skillful leadership of the head of the home? Would your walls admire the way values are communicated and demonstrated in your home? Chances are that you have a little uncertainty about how to answer. Sometimes it’s tough to sort out reality from wishful thinking. Nevertheless, it’s worth the effort to take a bit of time for humble self-evaluation. In fact, take a moment now to think about your home. Use the lines below to write down four or five adjectives that describe the family dynamics of your home. Try to capture some of the good and the not-so-good if you can.

How do you feel about what you wrote down? – Upbeat? Enthusiastic? Troubled? Overwhelmed? If you’re like most parents, you had no trouble thinking of one or two negative adjectives despite your best efforts and prayers. Let’s face it (future parents take note!): Raising a family is not a job for an idealist. It’s risky. There is no cause-and-effect certainty of the outcome. There is no guaranteed formula: “Do x, y and z, and your kids will never rebel or break your heart.” Even the best of parents sometimes have to live with less than the desired results. That being said, parent, Scripture does teach how you can have the best hope – given the reality of the fallen world – of making your home what you would desire it to be. Let’s now examine that teaching using the analogies of these four elements of a school: a teacher, a curriculum, a classroom and a lecture.

1. In the home, the primary teacher is the parent.

Some homes have two teachers, some have one. If you are running a one-teacher home, you are shouldering an incredible responsibility. But thankfully, for both you and the two-teacher homes, there is an assistant teacher you can rely on - your local church. God has given you the church to equip you in your teaching role and to help reinforce the teaching you do in your home. Just keep in mind that *you* are the primary teacher. The church is your assistant, not your replacement. God never intended His church to step in for parents who are out for the semester. This means that you should be actively teaching your children, rather than delegating that effort completely to the church. Your church can

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supply support, resources, guidance and significant relationships with other Christian adults, but your home still needs a primary teacher – you.

2. In the home, the classroom is life itself.

Earlier you read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. This passage has been the premier passage on education for the Jewish and Christian communities for thousands of years. It begins with the Hebrew word for *hear/listen*. In this context it carries the idea of *understand/pay attention*. Verse 4 could be paraphrased, "*Understand O Israel, that the Lord our God, is the only God.*" This is the basis for education in our homes. It tells us that there is a God who speaks with absolute authority and He has told us what is true. And our first responsibility to this God and His truth is to love Him with our whole being. Our second responsibility is teaching the next generation to do the same. Herein lies an important principle for Christian parents. You can boil down all the plans and strategies for parenting into two simple rules: Love your God in the presence of your children with all your heart, and love your children with all your heart.

These are easy to remember, but it takes diligent effort to apply them in the various situations of daily parenting. "*You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise... You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates*" (Deuteronomy 6:7, 9). To put this in modern terms it means teaching your kids to love God and His truth as life happens – during mealtimes, walks, vacations, working together, driving in the car (sometimes turning off the radio and the DVD system!) and quiet moments in the morning and evening. The classroom of life will include formal *teaching sessions* in which you mechanically walk through a subject, tell a Bible story or read a devotional book. But even more effective are informal, spontaneous *talking sessions* where God's truth comes alive by taking advantage of life situations. What makes this such an effective teaching method is that it is so practical. Teaching sessions happen in the classroom; talking sessions happen in the lab. Through talking sessions, your children learn how to apply God's truth in the real-time laboratory life.

3. In the home, the curriculum is God's truth distilled into a few significant values.

How will your children learn what is right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate? How will they learn what is best? You must teach them using a text book with authority to speak into every situation they will ever encounter. That text book is the Bible, a text with authority because it was authored by the Source of all truth. But, how do you turn the Bible into the best possible curriculum for your home – one that is relevant, insightful and compelling? You distill it into a concise, high-priority set of values for your family. Have you done that? If someone were to ask you the five most important values you are trying to teach your kids, could you rattle them off without a second thought? Most of us couldn't

because, although we say we believe in “family values”, we haven’t given enough time to think through what they are. Here is a suggestion of five biblical values Christian parents should teach their children. See if these would make your top five:

- **The essence of Christianity is experiencing a loving relationship with a loving God.**
Without this value firmly established in your childrens’ view of life, they’ll lose out on divine peace, divine guidance, life satisfaction and well-being. Notice that the emphasis here is on the God who loves them. No one can rightly experience God without apprehending God’s love for them and how it is mediated to them by Christ.
- **Serving Christ is the highest priority of life and most satisfying experience in life.**
Notice that this value states both our duty to serve Jesus and our delight in doing so. If you neglect to teach (with words and example) that serving Christ brings delight, then your kids may reject the abundant life that could be theirs. This doesn’t mean you should be unrealistic about suffering and trouble. Everyone experiences these, but only Christians experience the satisfaction of Christ’s abundant life along with them.
- **Character development is more important than temporal accomplishments.**
You’ll need to work hard on teaching this one, because the secular worldview of life is exactly the opposite. It says that success is measured and rewarded by wealth, comfort and pleasure. It is such an appealing lie that your children will readily buy into it unless, through hard work at teaching, you can convince them otherwise. Don’t go to the extreme of teaching them that accomplishments don’t matter. They do, and your children can be proud of the results of their gifts and hard work, but teach them that character rules over accomplishments in God’s eyes. David was not chosen king because of his résumé; God chose him because of his character.
- **I own nothing; I’m merely a manager of God’s possessions.**
Your kids need to understand that everything in life is a gift from God – health, time, property, income, knowledge, relationships, skills – even those things they would consider a liability. They have these things, not because of their efforts, but because a generous God is rich in mercy and has given them stewardship. Therefore, every decision they make with God’s possessions has spiritual impact because God holds them accountable for their stewardship.
- **A high quality life requires the nurture of significant, positive relationships.**
Relationships make up the dynamics of life. They are often difficult to build, but fragile and easy to damage. Therefore you will want to teach your kids how to develop good relational skills using Christ as the model. It is too common in our society to discard broken or difficult relationships. We deal with people using accusation, silence, argument, pouting and even

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desertion. But Christ taught us to pursue reconciliation, to value communication, humility and apology.

How do these stack up for you? In the **Equipping** section you'll have an opportunity to think about the top five most important values you want to teach your children.

4. In the home, the lecture is your life.

You give a lecture every time you ignore a speed limit, or obey it. You give a lecture every time you follow runaway desires, or refuse to. You give a lecture every time you treat your spouse with dignity, or disrespect. You give a lecture every time your child sees you enjoying your relationship with God, or not. You give a lecture every time you make life together fun, or fearful.

So, what is your life saying about God and His truth to your kids? You could be accepting your role as your kids' primary teacher. You could use the laboratory of life as your classroom. You could have a curriculum of relevant, compelling values. *But if you don't live those values consistently and spend enough time with your kids so they can see those values in action, then they will lose out.* Remember how Paul longed to spend time with the believers in Thessalonica? He wanted to be with them to impart more of himself to them. They were his joy and crown and, with almost fatherly pride, he longed for the day when he could present them to Jesus at His coming (see 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). Surely, Paul had many duties that busied his life, just as you have a lot of responsibilities. But he understood where his priorities lay, not with the tasks, but with the people. In the same way, your attention can be drawn by career, trials of life, personal recreation or hobbies, and even your kids' own sporting leagues and piano lessons. But, never lose focus on who your joy and crown is, who you would long to present to Jesus at His coming. So remember the two basic rules of parenting: Love God with all your heart *in the presence of your kids*, and love your kids with all your heart.

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EQUIPPING

Take some time to think carefully about the top-five biblical values you want to live for and pass on. If you have children at home, think about what you *really* want your kids to learn in life. If you don't, think about what you *really* want your life to say to your friends, neighbors and colleagues. Briefly describe the eternal significance of each value.

Value #1

Eternal Significance

Value #2

Eternal Significance

Value #3

Eternal Significance

Value #4

Eternal Significance

Value #5

Eternal Significance

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MISSION – HARVESTING

"And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'" (Mark 1:17)

At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and saw Peter and Andrew fishing with a net. Mark 1:17 records what Jesus said to them that day. Perhaps this verse is only a brief excerpt of a longer conversation, but it still captures in just a few words the essence of an essential command, a warm invitation and a hopeful promise. Did Jesus offer this invitation and promise only to 12 Apostles? Doesn't He also promise to make every one of His followers *fishers of men*?

Throughout this year, the Mission section of *The Journey* has sought to motivate and equip you to become more effective in your mission as a fisher of men through word and deed. In the Orientation material for *The Journey*, you read that learning to effectively share your faith is a key component of becoming a mature and equipped follower of Christ. Just as physical exercise produces physical development, your engagement in the mission to make the gospel known through word and deed is a spiritual exercise that drives spiritual hunger and thirst for God's Word and prayer, and these in turn drive spiritual growth. This is why *The Journey* has placed such a high priority on using life-on-life missional discipleship to better equip you to become a fisher of men. As a follower of Christ, you are called by Him and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a participant in the expansion of the Kingdom of God, and this ultimately feeds your soul so that you reach new depths of faith, hope, love and joy in the Lord Jesus. Let's review what you have learned about taking up Christ's mission so far:

1. **Living** – You learned that Christ's mission is to make His gospel known to all people. Those who receive His gospel become motivated and empowered by it to become participants in His mission. Therefore, His followers' mission is to make the gospel known through word and deed to the least and lost across the street where they live, work and play, across the track to those who may be culturally or economically distant, and across the ocean.
2. **Praying** – You learned to develop the grace commitment of daily prayer for the individuals or groups to whom you want to make the gospel known. Your prayers are never wasted because God has chosen to expand His Kingdom through the instrument of your prayers. As you pray faithfully and fervently you can expect God to answer by providing you with fruitful opportunities to make the gospel known through word and deed.
3. **Serving** – You learned that missional living includes demonstrating the gospel through service to the least and the lost. You and your Journey Group partnered together to get a taste of what it's like to engage in missional service. Whether as individuals or in teams,

missional followers of Christ pray for and look for opportunities to demonstrate the power of the gospel to those in need.

4. **Telling** – You learned to tell a brief, attractive story about your spiritual journey and how you came to trust in Jesus. The genuineness of your own story is a powerful tool for those who engage in missional living. Perhaps you have had an opportunity to tell your story to someone on your prayer list. If not, keep praying for and looking for an opportunity. Remember the promise, "...I will make you become fishers of men." (Mark 1:17).
5. **Dialoguing** – You learned a non-threatening approach for bringing spiritual life into conversations so that you could introduce The Answer and invite someone to investigate spiritual life with you using the *Life Issues* booklets.

This is great equipping, right? But it means nothing if you aren't actively engaged in missional living. Being a missional follower of Christ requires being just as intentional about the missional aspect of your spiritual life as you are about your personal worship. To develop the habit of personal worship, you must have a simple plan (when? where? what? how?) and set aside a specific time. It has to be on your daily calendar. In the same way, if you are going to grow in missional living, you have to plan for it. This includes creating a simple plan to make the gospel known to specific people, setting aside time for those activities, and sometimes even earmarking a portion of your budget.

But let's face it, many Christians feel apprehensive about sharing their faith (word) and just never seem to get around to demonstrating their faith (deed). They worry about the awkwardness, being perceived negatively, or just flat out being rejected. These are legitimate concerns. And, in reality, there are very few Christians who have a natural boldness and skill at engaging people in spiritual conversation, or a natural love of serving others. As a result, many Christians aren't mindful to look for opportunities and they devote little or no thought to living missionally. But since Scripture is clear that God both *calls* and *equips* His people to be active in making the gospel known, any concerns you have should not prevent you from seeking to live the most effective missional life you can. As you intentionally devote yourself to missional praying, serving, telling and conversing, you will begin to become aware of the opportunities God is placing in your way, and He will use your personality, life experience and devotion to make you a uniquely effective fisher of men.

During this section of *The Journey* you will be challenged to create and follow through on a simple plan to make the gospel known through word and deed. However, your mission assignment for this week is only to do a little self-examination via the questions on the next page. Be prepared to share your thoughts at your next Journey Group meeting.

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How have you been actively engaged in missional living, praying, serving, telling and conversing during this year in *The Journey*? Be specific.

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What are the most significant obstacles you face that prevent you from being more engaged in missional living?

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What do you believe needs to change in your life for you to be more intentionally engaged in mission?

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