

## **Sermons 2008**

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# Chapter 1. Keys To Successful Parenting

READ - Deuteronomy 6

TEXT - *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. (Deuteronomy 6:7)*

THEME - To be successful parents, we must HEAR the Word, PRIORITIZE, putting God in first place, TEACH our children by word and lifestyle, and REMEMBER what God has done for us.

## Introduction

ILLUS - In the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, the American women's 4 x 100 relay race was favored to win the gold medal. The team featured Marion Jones, a sprinter who had won four gold medals at the previous games in Sydney. The American team was already off to a strong start when Jones took the baton for the second leg of the race. She gained ground as she ran her 100 meters and approached Lauryn Williams, a young speedster who would run the third leg.

Williams began running as Jones drew near, but when she reached back to receive the baton, they couldn't complete the handoff. Once, twice, three times Jones thrust the baton forward, but each time it missed William's hand - she couldn't seem to wrap her fingers around it. Finally, on the fourth try, they made the connection. But by that time, they had crossed out of the 20 yard exchange zone and were disqualified. Everyone knew they were the fastest team on the track. The night before, they'd had the fastest qualifying time. But when they couldn't complete the handoff, their race was over.

As important as it is for the previous generation to set the pace by living authentically, at a certain point, a handoff must be made in which the next generation receives the baton of faith and begins to run with it. That handoff isn't as easy as it looks.

How do we ensure a successful handoff? How do we raise children to live lives of faith? How do we achieve success as Christian parents?

There are no guarantees. Children have a free will, just like you and I do, and they have choices to make in life. There is nothing parents can do that guarantee they'll make right choices.

But there are principles we can follow that come close to guarantees. *Proverbs 22:6 - Train up a child...*

Our text today gives us some keywords... principles that will help us... keys to successful parenting.

## Hear

vss. 3-4, 6

Say it out loud with me this morning - HEAR. I can imagine Moses thundering this word HEAR, O Israel. So, too, this morning I would thunder it to you. Nothing is more important.

The Word of God is the secret to success in every area of life. LISTEN TO IT! To those who attend FBC with any regularity, this probably sounds like a broken record. I say

it all the time - read your Bible, Christian. Study your Bible, Christian. Don't just listen to a preacher - READ YOUR BIBLE.

HEARING is a key to success in every area. The Bible is the world's greatest handbook for financial success... for wisdom... for managers and leaders... for every area of life!

And when the question comes up, "Where can a parent turn to learn about successful parenting?" the answer is - the Bible!

ILLUS - Beth and I just got rid of an ancient copy of Dr. Spock's book on child-rearing. It was the "big thing" when we had our first children. Today, bookshelves are lined with hundreds of tomes on successful parenting.

But there is no better manual for the parent than God's Word! We need to HEAR IT. We need to LISTEN TO IT!

Consider what it means to HEAR:

1. Hearing involves sound falling on your ears.

JOKE - An older couple had an ongoing semi-serious discussion about which one of them was losing their hearing. As time went on this became quite a bone of contention between them. The husband decided he would settle the issue once and for all. While his wife was enjoying a book in the living room he said in a loud voice, "Dear, would you like a cup of tea?" Upon hearing no response he progressed to the next room and said again in a firm voice, "Dear, would you like a cup of tea?" Still there was no reply from his wife. Lastly he went into the living room and stood directly behind the chair in which his wife was sitting. In an even louder voice he repeated, "Dear, would you like a cup of tea?" She turned to him with a slightly annoyed expression on her face and replied, "For the third time ... yes!

You have to get close in order to hear it!

ILLUS - I have stood in my backyard marvelling at the birds flying overhead. Due to the great distance between me and them, I hear no sound. Yet I recall a time when I stood fishing on the bank of the pond, and a goose flew in over my head, just missing my head as he glided in and landed a few feet away in the water. The sound nearly scared me out of my wits at that proximity. I was amazed at how much sound they make!

If you're going to HEAR, you have to GET CLOSE!

That means picking up your Bible and reading it.

It means listening to God's method of proclamation - preaching - it means being in church.

You can't HEAR if you're not CLOSE.

2. Hearing involves more than just sound falling on your eardrums. As taught in scripture, it might be better understood to you and I as "listen." It is active. It results in changed lives.

ILLUS - Notice how DOING / OBEYING is a central theme throughout this chapter. cf. *vs. 1 - that ye might DO THEM, vs. 2 - KEEP all His statutes, vs. 3 - HEAR, and OBSERVE TO DO, vs. 17 - ye shall DILIGENTLY KEEP, vs. 18 - and THOU SHALT DO that which is right and good, vs. 24 - the Lord commanded us to DO, vs. 25 - if we OBSERVE TO DO.*

*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (James 1:22)*

ACTIVE hearing... listening... letting the sound hit our ears, drill into our minds, and change our lives - that is the HEARING that we need.

The Bible is the most up-to-date book ever written. There is nothing about it that is old-fashioned or out of touch. It is perfect and accurate in any area it addresses. And,

parents, I promise you you will never regret using the Bible as your guidebook for parenting, for it is not out of touch in that area, either.

Say it with me one more time - HEAR!

## Prioritize

*And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deuteronomy 6:5)*

If you attend FBC, you'll hear it often - God needs to be #1 - He needs to be your first priority.

In life, there will be many things that scream for your time and attention. Parents, this will only increase as your kids get older. Having right priorities is vital.

ILLUS - You won't go far wrong if your priorities are God, Family, EVERYTHING ELSE. (And those first two NEVER CONFLICT.)

ILLUS - Cross on the wall - vertical bar represents our relationship with God, horizontal bar represents relationships with others. The vertical HOLDS UP the horizontal. ALL OUR RELATIONSHIPS are sustained by a right walk with God. Without that component, all our relationships are in danger of falling.

ILLUS - Jesus called this the greatest commandment. Here at FBC, we strive always to live up to the great commandments, and practice the great commission.

PARENTS - here is another key to success - PUT GOD FIRST IN YOUR LIFE. If you're doing it, your kids will SEE IT.

A sad thing in childrearing is when you learn that your kids learn more from what they SEE in you, than from what they HEAR. "Do as I say, not as I do," simply never works with kids. They will always do what you DO, for they learn that what you DO reflects what you really believe - where your priorities are.

ILLUS - If you say church is important in your life, but your kids see you put anything and everything ahead of faithful church attendance, they will believe it is NOT important. Isn't it interesting how the devil has managed to get every activity scheduled on the Lord's Day? Soccer games, little league games, boy scouts, girl scouts, family activities, recreation, extra hours at work... ALL placed in tension against God's command to honor 1 day in 7 as His day!

Our PRIORITIES are not seen in words, but in deeds. What do your kids see as your PRIORITIES? They are watching... and learning...

SONG - The Cat's in the Cradle, by Harry Chapin puts it well, describing what happens when our priorities are out of whack:

A child arrived just the other day,  
Came to the world in the usual way,  
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay,  
He learned to walk while I was away.  
He was talking before I knew it, and as he grew  
He said, "I'm going to be like you, Dad,  
You know I'm going to be like you."

My son turned ten just the other day,  
Said "Thanks for the ball, now c'mon let's play.  
Will you teach me to throw?" I said, "Not today,  
I've got a lot to do." He said, "That's OK."  
And he walked away and he smiled and he said  
"You know I'm going to be like you, Dad,  
You know I'm going to be like you."

He came from college just the other day,  
So much like a man, I just had to say,

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"I'm proud of you, won't you sit for a while?"  
He shook his head and said with a smile,  
"What I'm feeling like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys  
See you later, can I have them please?"

I've long since retired and my son's moved away,  
I called him up just the other day.  
"I'd like to see you, if you don't mind."  
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I could find the time.  
You see, my new job's a hassle and the kids have the flu,  
But it's sure nice talking you, Dad.  
It's been real nice talking to you."

And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me,  
He'd grown up just like me.  
My boy was just like me.

And the cat in the cradle and a silver spoon,  
Little Boy Blue and the Man in the Moon,  
"When you coming home, son?" "I don't know when,  
But we'll get together then.  
You know we'll have a good time then."

Perhaps no song has ever been written that more clearly teaches this truth - our kids will set their priorities by watching ours. Will they learn that God is # 1? Only if He really is!

Say it out loud with me, church - keywords to success are HEAR and PRIORITIZE.

## Teach

*vs.* 7-9

Jewish people took this literally. Orthodox Jews, even today, may be seen wearing phylacteries on their foreheads and hands. Jewish homes usually have a mezuzah on the doorpost.

To us, the meaning is simple - TEACH the faith to our children, both in WORD and in LIFESTYLE. Don't just SAY IT, but LIVE IT. Don't just PROCLAIM IT, but MODEL IT.

QUOTE - What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say. (That could have come from anyone of our children.)

ILLUS - We have a plaque on our wall - Joshua 24:15 - as for me... But our kids will ignore what is written on our walls if they don't see it modeled in our lives.

I like the way the NIV puts *vs. 6* - IMPRESS THEM ON YOUR CHILDREN.

Perhaps this point is redundant with the last, but I like the way Moses put feet to it. He brought it right down to where we can understand it. Our teaching is not just on Sundays, but everyday. It is not just in church (although that is vital), but in our homes. It is not just for a few minutes before mealtime, or as we tuck little Ally into bed... it is *when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up...*

In other words, it is part of our daily life and conversation.

ILLUS - I read a study about how adults learn, as compared to how children learn. Whereas adults often learn via the assimilation of facts, this study concluded that children learn primarily from the assimilation of EXPERIENCES. Think about it - how does a child learn to talk... from a textbook, or by watching you talk? They assimilate what they see!

ILLUS - Joel and Rob - amazing similarities of mannerism.

ILLUS - Think of the Christians who have had the greatest impact on you, Christian. Were they so influential because they could verbalize scripture to you, or because they modeled it... lived it... were a walking sermon? Our kids need such.

Say it with me, keywords to success - HEAR, PRIORITIZE, TEACH... and finally...

## Remember

vss. 10-12; 20-25

It is simply not possible to ignore the Word of God, if we remember how He saved us from sin, washed us in His blood, and gave us eternal life.

Your priorities will be right when you remember from whence you came...

Your lips and your life will teach the truth of God's Word when your memory is reminded of all He has done for you...

Do you remember, parents?

1. ... that you were a sinner? Lost, without hope, undone?

*All have sinned... Romans 3:23*

I was once a sinner, but I came  
Pardon to receive from my Lord:  
This was freely given, and I found  
That He always kept His word.

2. ... that Jesus loved you and paid the price for your sin?

*God commendeth His love toward us... Romans 5:8*

3. ... that everytime you sin, He forgives... over and over and over again.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us  
our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John  
1:9)*

4. ... that He is the source of every provision... every blessing...

*... what hast thou that thou didst not receive? (1 Corinthians 4:7)*

There are no self-made men... nobody pulls themselves up by their own bootstraps... nobody is truly self-sufficient.

ILLUS - Lance Armstrong's interview where he was asked how it felt to have beaten cancer. With tears in his eyes he pointed out that "nobody beats cancer." He told of many who had been in the cancer ward with him, and although they had fought as hard or harder than he had, yet they died. Humbled by the experience, he stated emphatically that it had nothing to do with him.

EVERYTHING comes from God. You are what you are because of God! REMEMBER!

Say it with me, REMEMBER!

## Conclusion

If you read your Bibles, you know that some who listened to Moses on this day, learned and lived what he taught. They heard the word, they prioritized (put God first), they taught their children and their grandchildren, and they never forgot all that God had done for them.

Those who did so were blessed.

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But if you read, you also know some didn't. They listened to other voices, rather than God's word. They allowed the cares of life... the fads of the day... the pressures of business and other influences, to dethrone God. He became less and less important to them, and their children heard about Him less and less, and no longer saw Him modeled in their parents lives. They forgot what their God had done for them.

Let us be in the first group. Parents - memorize the keys to successful parenting - HEAR... PRIORITIZE... TEACH... REMEMBER...