

DEVELOPING A

**SPIRITUAL
LEGACY**

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DEVOTIONAL

There is no doubt that family life is under tremendous pressure in our day and age; and living in Jozi(aka Johannesburg) makes family life that much more difficult. I am not exactly sure why your family lives in Jozi; perhaps you relocated here from elsewhere in South Africa, or from other parts of Africa, however, one thing is certain; living in the great city of Jozi will impact the way you live as a family, and the way you live out your faith commitment. With the rapid rate of urbanization globally, families are becoming smaller, more nuclear and more isolated than ever before; leaving many people without the wider support network they may have grown up with in their childhood- this trend will continue into the future, and as Christian parents and families, we will need to be far more intentional about establishing strong Christian values and leaving our children a legacy of spiritual worth in a world obsessed with material success. Renowned Atheist, Richard Dawkins, in his book, 'The God Delusion' states: "There is no such thing as a Christian child: only a child of Christian parents". This statement in itself, set against the obvious backdrop of his claims, highlights the importance of what Deuteronomy 6: 4f speaks of in relation to fostering a spiritual legacy within our families that is transmitted inter-generationally. God cares about generations; even the generation yet unborn- and as parents, and grandparents, our primary concern needs to be rooted in the spiritual legacy we create for our children. As a parent, I know that it can be disturbing to realize that our children often mirror the way we speak and act; our lives impress upon our children and they in many ways emulate who we are, and how we act in situations. For this reason, it is important for parents to heed the words of the *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6: 4- 9:

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 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. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. I wonder, do you see your parental role in the light of establishing a spiritual legacy and imparting truth through instruction, discipline, love and service? Is your child's behavior indicative of what they see on display at home? How do we change that scorecard and make a meaningful difference in their lives that will lead them toward being more than a follower of Christ; becoming a disciple of Jesus.

DAY ONE

“Hear, O Israel” Deuteronomy 6:4a

God speaks to us in many ways today; but God speaks primarily through His Word, and through His son, Jesus, who is the exact representation of His being (Jn 1). God, in this great text, is imploring Israel; God’s people to hear; to listen with the intent of action. In other words, what was being stated in the coming verse was of such magnitude that Israel needed to be attentive, but also needed to act. In South Arica, we are abundantly blessed in many ways; one of which is the ability to worship freely and openly, where in many countries this is not tolerated/ legal. How often do you hear God’s word spoken to you and not do something about it? Think about some of what you may have heard this last Sunday, or read about in the Bible- HEAR, what is God directing you to do on the basis of what you have heard? The Psalmist reminds us in Psalm 119, that God’s word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path; for when we hear the word and put it into practice, our lives will be preserved, and we please our heavenly Father.

Ponder: As you give your children instructions and expect them to obey; so too God instructs us as His children. We are called to obey, not because God is trying to me mean or controlling, but because He has our best interests in mind. What do you need to do in obedience to His word today?

Pray with me: “Lord, please help me to be attentive to your word today, and to acknowledge your parenthood role in my own life as I strive to exercise the authority and responsibility that you have delegated to me. I need your help to become all that you desire of me; help me to lead from a basis of relationship with you, and depend less on my own strength” Amen.

DAY TWO

“...The Lord our God, the Lord is one” Deuteronomy 6:4b

God is a jealous God, and does not compete with anyone, or anything else for glory. This portion of Scripture has, in many ways, a double meaning; the Lord is lord ALONE, and the Lord is ONE. We need to grasp the wonder and mystery of both of these aspects within this text. However, God is not alienated from us, or far removed; the Bible says that He is OUR God, but that our God is exclusive in his character and inclusive in His message. This is consistently demonstrated to us in the Bible and finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus' atonement and the Holy Spirit's 'adoption' of Christians into the family of God.

Ponder: Is God really lord of your life? Is He number one? We all like the concept of a saviour, as no one likes to be left stranded, however God is BOTH savior and Lord, how does your life reflect this reality?

Pray with me: “Father, forgive me for the many times that I do not make you a priority in my life; where I fill my life with many activities that so often detract from time with you. Help me to prioritize you in my life and to live my life in the light of who you are; a community on mission. Thank you Father for sending your son, thank you Spirit of God that I can call God Father through your enablement; help me experience the fullness of who you are and translate that into my life and parenting” Amen.

DAY THREE

“5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength”. Deuteronomy 6:5

Having recently celebrated valentines day in February, I am reminded of the many misguided ways people think of love and its demonstration in our society. I would venture to say that the meaning of love has been lost in many sectors of society. We say we love ice cream, we love our pet dog, we love our wives, we love golf AND we love God. How inexpressive and limited English can be sometimes; and we see that the Greek usage of the term love reflects four aspects; Agape love demonstrated God’s love, *phileo* love is brotherly in affection; Storge love is experienced as family and eros love is demonstrated in the confines of marriage- the Bible reflects all of this. However, agape love is the specific term Jesus employs in the New Testament when speaking on this subject. Love, according to Jesus, is to move away from ego-centric self, and be willing to please others- seeking the best for people.

Ponder: Do you love like Christ, or do you expect a return for the investment of time or money? If you understand the fullness of God’s love for you, loving others, although tough, will come more easily, as you are able to grasp the depth and importance of the simple and powerful act of love.

Pray with me: “God, I recognize that my love is always imperfect, but that you are love, and that your love completes who I am. As I experience your love, help me to be loving toward my family, children, friends and strangers that you bring along my path. I recognize that following you, Jesus, involves loving you passionately, and expressing your love to my neighbor. Open my eyes to the possibilities that exist to show love today” Amen.

DAY FOUR

“6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children”. Deuteronomy 6:6, 7

Children can often be stubborn, and are, by nature somewhat rebellious; of course they don't get this quality from their parents do they? Of course not! I often look at my daughters and realize again and again how ingrained sin is in our DNA. One of the challenges each parent faces, in bringing up their child under God's instruction is what this text speaks of; 'impressing them on your children'; yes, we are called to impress our faith onto our children, however, this is NOT something we demand or force, it is something we are called to model in front of them. When God's commandments are upon our hearts, our children will, be impressed and our relationship with God, will become a catalyst for theirs.

Ponder: What aspects of your spiritual heritage/ legacy do you need to ask God to redeem? Perhaps this may be a very legalistic upbringing where you were expected to do what the Bible said without any modeling of Biblical values from your parents/ guardians. Today, you have an opportunity to allow God's ways to be impressed upon your children in a healthy way that will enable to have a personal connection with God- Christianity is more caught than taught, so remember to demonstrate faith and your children will follow!

Pray with me: “You search my heart, o God, and there is nothing hidden from your sight. Forgive me for the days when following you meant obeying rules and commandments without heart and relationship. I recognize all that you have done for me through your son, Jesus, and respond with gratitude today. Because of your love for me, help me to respond in ways that evoke the grace I have experienced. May I impress this onto my children, and may they emulate my relationship with you my Father” Amen

DAY FIVE

“...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. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates”.

Deuteronomy 6:7-9

Our conversations shape much of who we are and aspire to be; however, because of the privatization of faith, many people feel insecure about speaking of their faith to others. However, when it comes to your home, we need to sanctify our speech, we need to redeem our conversation and create an environment within which our children can express their challenges and hear the wisdom of their parents from God’s word. Christianity is more than outward forms and symbols, it is an inward commitment with outward forms and symbols- it is a relationship with God that radically changes the way we live, move and work, In what ways does the Gospel change everything? Israel realized their lifestyle needed to reflect their commitment; what about you?

Ponder: Although we do not need to necessarily wear Christian t-shirts and place often weird Christian bumper stickers on our cars, nor write our religious affiliation on our gates, there is a real sense that the Gospel changes the scorecard for how we live our lives and how we fit in with society. Israel was expected to be different from the nations around, and we, as Christians are expected to outwardly demonstrate our inner commitment through the great command and the great commission. As we talk about developing a spiritual legacy, how are you doing in this department?

Pray with me: “I know that the Christian faith is more than mere ritual and church attendance; it is a lifestyle that is built from a dynamic relationship. Help me today to find creative ways of expressing my love for you that will have a lasting impact upon my family this week. Forgive me for that bad example I may have set by the things I did, or did not do, but help me to change my mindset in the simple tasks I do each day, to make each of them moments of blissful worship and adoration” Amen.