

Where Loving God Begins
Deuteronomy 6:5-9
January 14, 2018

Introduction: Annual Conference, Traction Tracks, Family Ties: Home, Church and Community

Team: Pastor and laity. Rethink current ministry approach and how we do things. What if New Hope was known in the area as “The Family Church”? Define the family, traditional/nuclear, single-parent, blended, extended/grandparent, foster, transnational, conditionally separated, adoptive, co-custody.

Homework: Interview community leaders to discover felt needs. Interviewed parents

I had not decided when we could begin presenting some of the things we have learned, from the pulpit. Last Sunday as I looked out over the congregation and saw all of the families who were present, I thought we should begin now.

Imagine you are shopping at Walmart and as you are walking through the parking lot towards the front doors of the store, you notice a camera crew and a guy with a microphone interviewing people. As you get closer the microphone is thrust in your direction and you are asked the question – “In your opinion, ***what is the purpose of the family?***” You are trying to think of something meaningful as you are walking. So you kind of blurt out, “Supporting each other, raising kids, being a safe place, love.” Not bad a bad answer for the spur of the moment. If that were to happen to you, how would you answer?

What really is the purpose of the family? Why did God choose to give you children? God has not left us without answers. He is the one who created marriage and family, and he is the one who gave us our children. He is the one who determines the purpose of family.

Our journey to discover God’s vision for our homes begins in Matthew 22:35-38. A religious leader approached Jesus one day with a profound question. “One of them, an expert in the law, tested Jesus with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?” Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” Matthew 22:35-38

What an important question. Basically he asked Jesus, “If you were to boil down the scriptures, God’s very words to us, into just one thing what would it be?” Jesus’ answer was powerful. There is one grand purpose to our lives. According to Jesus, we are created to know and love God with our whole being.

The philosopher, Blaise Pascal once wrote, “We desperately try to find purpose in everything around us but the “infinite abyss” in our hearts can be filled by God Himself. We were built by God to be in deep personal love relationship with Him, and if we do not have it, our hearts are restless and our souls ache. Without a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, there is a constant nagging that there must be something more to life. There must be something to fill the void inside. So we start cramming everything and anything into that void to make it go away. We try money, the latest toys, popularity, sex. . you name it. The world tells us if we just grab enough of that stuff and pack it into our lives, we will be satisfied. And sometimes we are . . . for a while. Then the ache returns.”

Jesus, on the other hand, tells us that a love relationship with God is what brings satisfaction to life here on earth and for eternity. According to Jesus the most important command in scripture is to love God. Jesus quoted from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6. Let’s go back to those words that Moses had written 1400 years before Jesus was born. Then these verse we find the commandment that Jesus says is the most important and we also learn what God wants us to do about it. ***Deuteronomy 6:5-6 – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts.”***

I want you to see something here. This passage, which Jesus said was the most important commandment in scripture, begins with the heart and ends with the heart. “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart” and then “These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts.”

When Jesus walked on earth, who was the one group of people that he was constantly in confrontation with? The Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day. They knew the scriptures inside and out. They kept all of the rules down to the minutest detail. But what did Jesus say about them time and time again? Their hearts were far from God. Knowing your Bible is important, doing the right thing is important, but your motive for doing those things is what really matters. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commands.” John 14:15

More than anything else, God wants your heart and the heart of your children. If God wants our hearts and the hearts of our children to love Him, how does that happen? How is the human heart shaped? Where were your heart and character formed? The greatest earthly influence in people’s lives is what they experience in the homes where they are raised. God has given parents and grandparents tremendous power and influence over the hearts of their children and grandchildren.

Now this influence maybe used for great harm, but God desires to use it for the greatest good. Mom and Dad, no one can compete with your power to bless your children, to build character in their hearts and to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ. No

one else can provide a home for them where they know that their parents love God and love them.

Let's go back to what Jesus said was the most important thing in life. ***"To love God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and with all of your strength. These commandments I give you today are to be upon your hearts."***

OK, in a few minutes when we leave here, how do we live out the greatest commandment? Where do we start? The next verse, verse 7, tells us where to begin. ***"Impress them on your children." Duet. 6:7***

So our first action step for following the greatest commandment, is to impress upon our children a love for God. This is our first and greatest calling. Those five words, "impress them on your children" is God's primary plan for evangelism and discipleship in the world today. Parent to child, learning to love God with everything you have.

Why did God give us children and families? To impress upon them, to teach them, to show them how to love God. That is our life's purpose.

Might I just close by saying, parents, this is not something the church can do for you. At best the church can come along side you and encourage and support what you are doing at home.