

Session 1

Influence With Intent

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:37-38

Memory Verse

Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

– DEUTERONOMY 6:7, CSB



Influence With Intent

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Jesus clearly identified the most important commandment. Believers must be intentional about knowing God, loving God, and leading the next generation to do the same.

An interesting thing about kids is how different they can be. Some kids will listen to a series of instructions and go do them all. Other kids will be paralyzed if you tell them more than one thing to do at a time or may be able to complete one but need to be reminded of the others. Still others must see their instructions on a chore chart or in some visual way.

While some obedience issues are directly related to age and people grow out of them as they mature, many adults also have a certain way we process instructions. We all develop a pattern for how we complete assignments or obey commands.

The Old Testament gives a lot of instructions for living. There were more than 600 laws people were responsible for knowing and keeping or at least trying to keep. When Jesus came and walked on the earth, He challenged the old way of life that many religious leaders of the day were entrenched in. As a result, they felt threatened.

These leaders questioned Jesus in attempts to discredit Him or catch Him in a mistake. We can be certain that He was sinless and perfect, so that never happened, but the passages we are studying today give clarification to some questions about the commandments. They also serve as encouragement for believers who want to live a godly life as we lead the next generation to do the same.

Because Jesus came, lived a perfect life, and died for our sins, we are no longer under the law and desperate to keep over 600 laws. But we are responsible for how we live, and Scripture makes it clear what the life of a believer should look like. We are accountable for our actions and the way that we train and lead the generations after us.

 How do you respond to people who struggle to follow multiple instructions at one time?

 How well do you receive instructions? Do you like to know the whole list at once or just a few steps at a time?

 What have you found to be helpful when you have a list of things you need to accomplish or complete?

Session Summary

To lead the next generation well, we must focus on the most important things of faith. Jesus boldly quoted an Old Testament passage to reinforce what we must do specifically to know God and lead our children to have a vibrant, sustainable faith.

1. Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:37-38)

There is a saying, “If you aim at nothing you will hit it every time.” Many of us can attest to the truth of this, but sometimes we feel overwhelmed if there are too many targets to shoot for in our lives. Because the Bible is true and relevant to daily living, we should always strive to be like Jesus. The best way to do this is to know and apply Scripture. Yet how is it possible to live up to all those laws and commandments?

? How do you typically respond when faced with many choices and instructions? Why?

Because He knows us well and wants us to succeed at living godly lives, Jesus simplified the law by summing up the 613 Old Testament laws into two most important ones. Once we identify the most important command, we can focus on what matters most.

The culture we live in is in crisis in many ways but one of the most evident is a real tension for people to understand who they are and why they are here. This goes back to purpose, and when we get a better grasp on who God is, we understand ourselves more clearly. Once we understand ourselves, we gain clarity on what we were created to do, and we understand our purpose.

? How would you describe a Christian's main purpose according to Matthew 22:37-38?

To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is simple, but it's not easy. Most of us would freely admit that this is much tougher than it. After all, we have many things outside of God that draw our attention and steal our affection regularly. Think about what you spend most of your time, energy, and money on to help you determine how much you are really loving God the way we are called to.

Though it can be sobering to realize how far short we fall of this command, it is also empowering. Jesus does not give His people commands that are unattainable. He wants you to succeed and is willing to help if we are willing to seek Him for the wisdom, discernment, and strength to make the next right choice daily.

? Application: Evaluate your own heart and life to determine where you are not loving God with your all. What needs to change for you to move toward obedience of this command?

2. Know it (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

Going back to this Old Testament record of the same commandment gives practical application of how we as believers can love God with our all. These verses in Deuteronomy are part of the Shema, a very well known portion of Jewish teaching that covers both a description of who God is and what our response to Him should be. These words were not just taught but were literally so foundational that they were quoted daily by people of faith because they give specifics for how believers should live.

Along the same practice as the Shema, the use of common words or phrases can be used to teach, instruct, motivate and even to identify as part of a group or team. You may have been part of a team that had some maxims or mantras they quoted before they competed or even a team at work that had certain phrases they used often. Using the same verbiage or lingo can help create culture and build a common team spirit.

? When have you been part of a group or team that had maxims or a mantra that was used to build a team spirit and create a sense of identity? How can this concept be helpful to us as believers?

A young generation of Israelites had come of age in the wilderness during 40 years of wandering. They were anxious to enter the land of promise and to enjoy the fruits of the land said to be flowing with milk and honey. Moses sought to prepare this new generation of Israelites for the challenging spiritual adventure ahead of them. Success would depend on their knowledge of and obedience to God's laws. Having reminded the present generation of God's revelation of His law at Mount Sinai, Moses urged the people to keep God's laws and to pass them on to future generations.

Notice that these verses start with a declaration about who God is. In stating that He is the one true God, there was immediate separation from any of the other false gods people worshiped. Being confident and solidly convinced that the Lord is the one true God makes all the difference.

The language used in Deuteronomy 6 also references the Trinity or plural nature of God. He is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we have a stronger understanding of who God is, it will affect the way we live our lives. He is a personal God. He is the Trinitarian; He is One God existing in three Persons. He is the one true God, who deserves our all—including a healthy fear and respect for him.



How does knowing God better affect the choices you make?

If you love someone, you want to know them better. Conversely, when we get to know God better, we will love Him more just as we are commanded to do. But notice that what is expected and required of us first is not about our doing but about our being. We are commanded to love God with our all first. Interestingly when we love God in the right way, our actions follow in line. We are only able to love others in the right way when we begin by loving God in the right way. It all starts with knowing God and loving Him the way He deserves.

? Application: What do you need to do differently to grow in your knowledge of who God is? Knowledge is not the same as love, but how does knowledge of God encourage our love of Him?

3. Teach it (Deuteronomy 6:7-9)

Once you know God and love Him the way you should, the second part of the Shema gets into specific actions that will follow. Just as Jesus lived His life intentionally and selflessly, we are also called to focus on others.

We show our exclusive love for the one true God by openly and sincerely demonstrating our commitment to His ways. We must act intentionally to remind ourselves of His commands, and we must be careful to pass these commands on to the next generation.

We can't teach what we don't know ourselves. And we can't help our kids love God with everything they are unless we know what that means ourselves. So, God told His people to love Him, and then as they love Him, to teach the next generation to do the same.

This is about investing in the next generation and bestowing on them the things we have learned. Scripture was not readily available in Moses's day, and it was vital that the adults who believed formed the habit and discipline of speaking the Word aloud throughout the day.

? What role does your belief in and knowledge of Scripture play in the way you are raising your children or speaking into the next generation?

These verses describe knowing God through His Word to the level of posting it in a visible area so that it could be seen and read over and over again. This enabled them to still be influenced by the Word of God as they went about their daily lives. Placing the truth about God in prominent places also helped pass that discipline on to the following generations.

? What are ways we follow this instruction to keep God's Word before us and around our homes all day?

There are some who believe making disciples is the responsibility of the church, while other who feel that parents should be the main disciple-makers. The answer according to Scripture is both. It is the job of every believer to be a disciple maker. The most effective discipling of the next generation happens when the church and the home partner together to train, teach, and develop our children.

? Application: What is God calling you to do to help disciple the next generation more intentionally?

Conclusion

Don't miss that the whole instruction to teach and impress the truth to the next generation is prefaced by the command to love God with all you are. Sometimes people get caught up in thinking that making disciples is about what we do but it all starts with who we are first. When we know God more fully and recognize the role the Holy Spirit plays in who we are becoming, then all our lives will be used more effectively in reaching, guiding, and teaching the following generations.

Too many people feel ill equipped to be disciple-makers, so they look for someone else to fill that role and miss out on the blessings of obeying the Lord. That is the beauty of recognizing that the Holy Spirit works through us to do His work. We are just called to know Him, know His Word, and share what we know with those around us. This is freeing because it moves our dependence from ourselves to the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit, and that's when we start to see a huge difference.

 How have you seen the reality that who you are affects what you do?

 What holds you back from feeling like you are a strong disciple maker?

 What do you need to do to be more dependent on the Holy Spirit in making disciples?

 How will you partner with our church to make more disciples of the next generation?



FOR NEXT WEEK

Influence With Love

Main Passages

- Deuteronomy 7:6-11; 1 Peter 2:9-10; 1 John 4:19

Session Outline

1. Who are we? (Deuteronomy 7:6; 1 Peter 2:9)
2. Why are we special? (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; 1 Peter 2:10)
3. What is our response? (Deuteronomy 7:9-11; 1 John 4:19)

Memorize

Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

- Deuteronomy 6:7, CSB