



**"Family Foundations"**  
**Rev. Dr. Scott Field**  
**Deuteronomy 6:4-9**  
**May 12, 2019**  
**9:15 AM Service**

### It's Mothers' Day!



Observing Mothers' Day brings up a lot of feelings, doesn't it?

Like a lot of our holiday-type celebrations, our expectations of a special day run into the realities of life. Mothers' Day is intended to lift up the irreplaceable role of mothers.

- But some moms feel no such appreciation at all – certainly not the rest of the year and maybe not on this day, either.
- And some moms, honestly, are hard to appreciate in the first place.
- For others, who have wanted to be moms or who have wanted to trade in the children they have for some better models – well, the entire role of being a mother -- at least as we've portrayed it in our culture – causes grief or anxiety or guilt or remorse.

This can be a pretty tough day.

No wonder there are so many Mothers' Day brunches; it's no surprise that getting a restaurant reservation for Mothers' Day can be hard to come by. Having the family out in public for a meal has the additional benefit of everybody generally behaving well enough to look like things are pretty good – whether they are or not.

## **The Challenges of Family**

The reality most of us live with is that being family is unpredictable, filled with "game-time decisions", requires adapting in ways for which we are unprepared, and has ambiguous and undefined outcomes.

Tech writer Molly McHugh recently summarized why many mothers feel increasing anxiety about parenting. (Note the interesting title and subtitle of her article.) In short, McHugh writes, "The concept of 'It takes a village' [to raise a child] has been slowly dying. More than ever, people are accomplishing the intensely demanding tasks of child-rearing on their own." She quotes a pediatrician named Dr. Harvey Karp who says,

*Today, people think that when they have their child, they know what they're doing, and it's normal to raise them on their own, and if they have a hard time with that, they are wusses. But the truth is parents today have the hardest job because no one ever did this on their own and it's very hard to do ... there was this idea [that] it was macho to sleep less—and there's this macho idea with moms: "I get up with my baby every time she cries." But it's not like you're a great mom just because you've been awake 20 out of 24 hours.*

Molly McHugh, "Mommy, Daddy, and Their Precious Little Bundle of Data: How information collection, obsessive apps, and technological advances are making parents more paranoid than ever," *The Ringer* (1-9-17)

Actually, it isn't just the role of mothers. This applies to living in families overall.

Mothers, yes, but also fathers, step-parents, grandparents, daycare providers, singles and couples without children or empty-nesters all with opportunities, interests in, and, yes, obligations toward the successful launch of the next generation. What many of us *are* is very busy with our relationship commitments. What we often *are not*, however, is very strategic. We easily confuse motion for action; good intentions for desired outcomes.

Of course there is a lot of talk about "work-life" balance or "family comes first", but often that means we attempt to put a priority on time together in one form or another, but the way we use our time and the values that underlie our use of our time, are sort of like that junk drawer you might have in the kitchen: it has out of date coupons, wire cutters, matchbooks from restaurants, lawn waste stickers, rubber bands, a bottle opener, maybe a meat thermometer...stuff you want to hang on to because it might be important, but in actuality it is just the catch all place for disorganization. I am *not* criticizing a junk drawer – I *am* pointing out that without deliberate and intentional values, priorities, and practices, our "family living" will be a collection of times spent together without much anticipation of what will increase the possibilities of preferred outcomes.

Mary Pipher, in *Family Therapy Networker*, put it this way in a way that I've carried around for over twenty years:

"It's become clearer and clearer to me that if families just let the culture happen to them, they end up fat, addicted, broke, with a house full of junk, and no time."

### **The Honest-to-God truth About Faith at Home**

All of us are born or adopted into families of one sort or another. And many of us, as adults, have, in one sense or another, created a family of which we are part. But families are God's idea and, as you might expect, we have been given some instruction in God's Word about being family. Beyond the relationship gifts of faithful love and forgiveness, the possibility of growing up and second chances and cheering each other along, there are also the gifts of identity (we learn who we are in a family), value (we learn that we are esteemed by others and so begin to believe in ourselves), and purpose (we are here for a reason). Even more, families are the place where we can experience the gift of faith or, better, we can both experience faith and prepare for faith that lasts a lifetime.

When we talk about faith and religion and belief in our culture, we often have churches or other religious institutions in mind. But in God's way of designing the world, the family is the primary context for experiencing and developing faith. The research from the sociology of religion is pretty clear on this: if parents have a faith that has an impact on family life, the children are much more likely to have an active faith as they become adults.

### **A Quick Check of the Map**

If we take a brief check of the Scriptures, here is what we see:

*<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

The first and greatest commandment is not to get a religion or join a church. It is to love the God who has loved us first:

*<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

This love of God is expressed in aligning ourselves with God's ways as expressed in God's commands:

*<sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.*

This passage of Scripture records Moses speaking. If we review all of the “commandments that I give you today” there is quite a list, but all of them are related to the Top Ten. The Ten Commandments – which, by the way, bring faith, family, and relationships together.

No other gods before me but the true and living God of heaven and earth.

Don’t make a god out of yourself, your house, your children, your work, your car, your Pinterest account, or your Facebook postings. Refuse to worship the created things; instead, worship the Creator of all.

Don’t abuse others by using my name to condemn them; don’t put my seal of approval on stuff that you really just made up yourself.

Remember to rest at least one day a week; you don’t keep the world spinning. I do. Besides you need time to worship and to tend to relationships with others that need your attention.

Respect your family, especially your parents. You are part of a heritage.

Do not murder. Life is not yours to take.

Do not let your sexuality run outside of the boundaries set for it. Sex is powerful stuff. A fire in the furnace warms the house. A fire in the attic burns the house down. Keep sex within the boundaries I’ve established.

Don’t steal things from others.

Don’t lie about other people.

Be content with what you have. Don’t spend your time desiring what belongs to others.

And then comes the way faith gets formed in the family part:

*<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

That is a description of live your faith day by day and your children will see it, experience it, and, perhaps, pick it up themselves.

**Okay, but this isn’t as easy as it seems...**

Maybe. But it is probably easier than you think.  
In fact, it probably has everything to do with how you think.

If as parents and grandparents we are going to love the Lord our God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we are going to have to quit dividing our devotion and distributing our first and foremost love.

So, we, and our families, will benefit if we stop some things:

Stop our own hypocrisy. No matter what we claim to believe, our children and grandchildren will judge our integrity by how we behave.

Stop propping up the appearance that we “know everything already”, so we don’t have to participate in learning our faith. As soon as our children go to kindergarten, they learn that there are other adults who know as much or more than their parents. It’s okay to be a learner when it comes to matters of faith.

Stop treating religious practices like a discretionary choice.

Children get the message when we wouldn’t for a moment miss the Cubs game or our favorite show or activity, but we can skip worship or prayer because, well, the way we behave indicates that we really do have other gods that come before the living God, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Stop delegating religious practice to something they teach at church. If it doesn’t work at home it probably isn’t worth doing. Faith is nurtured at the dinner table, the bedtime prayers, the ways conflict in the family is resolved, how money is spent, what is valued, and the regular practice of worship.

And we, and our families, will benefit if we start some things:

Let them see us engaged in the practice of our faith through learning or serving or giving or praying.

Include them in part of a healthy faith community like First Church

Engage the Bible together.

Truth to be told, many of us who are parents and grandparents feel like we don’t really know how to do this very well but we’re not sure how to make a start or a re-start now.

Let me suggest an option that might be helpful.

Go to [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com).

There is a small and creative team that has developed short, animated narrative stories of each of the books of the Bible, the over-arching narrative of the Bible as a whole, and a pretty cool series on how to read and understand the Bible. I don’t think any of them are more than six minutes. And they work

for adults as well as youth and older elementary children. So – whether on a TV or a tablet or a smartphone – you, and they, can begin to engage the Bible in a fresh way together. And it's free.

Give it a try and see if there isn't an uptick in your desire and ability to welcome fresh faith into the relationships of your family.