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# Scriptures in Your Home

## Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4

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**Introduction** Edwin Sidney Hartland begins his classic, "The Science of Fairy Tales" with the following: "The art of storytelling has been cultivated in all ages and among all nations of which we have any record; it is the outcome of an instinct implanted universally in the human mind." Without going into the shortcomings of the humanist sociology inherent to the statement, it does seem to be one of the universals of human existence and mankind's history: the art of storytelling, especially to children. Telling stories to children transcends cultures, languages, generations, and centuries. It doesn't matter whether one is hearing Tagalog folklore in the Philippines, the legend of Babushka in Russia, or the epic of Kings in Iran. Children from all languages and people groups gather round those older than they to hear tales of legends and heroes of times gone by, legends and heroes who look like them, think like them, and speak like them. Regardless of whether a child is in Argentina or Finland, when the story is over, he or she will share the common experience of having learned something about themselves, and if the storyteller has done their job, the child will find him or herself a participant in the same story on the same stage within which hundreds and thousands before them have participated. This child will be inspired to rise to the supreme ethics, ideals, and virtues of his or her culture. Stories connect the present with the past, and in doing so, the past is replicated in the present, passing along from generation to generation values, meaning, and purpose. And someday, children in India, Ethiopia, and the Marianas will themselves be the storytellers, perpetuating the drama all over again and in doing so continuing the life story of their own people group and culture.

As we consider this month the things that are central in the home, we have already considered the centrality of Christ in the home, the gospel centered home, and the centrality of Scripture in the home. This evening our focus is on "Scriptures in Your Home". Earlier today, Russ had us focus on what it means for the Scriptures to be central in the home. My task tonight is to flesh that out. We want to ask the question what does *that* look like? How do I make sure that Scriptures are central in our home? At one level, this question has already been answered in this series. Last week, Devon challenged us to "transparently live and intentionally speak of the gospel and its many implications" in thinking about family life. Gospel and Word go hand in hand, and in fact, many times throughout scripture, gospel and

Word are used interchangeably. Tonight, I want to unpack that thought. The Scriptures themselves help us to see just how it is that our homes can have a Scripture orientation.

What does a Word-oriented home look like? The Scriptures do not leave us hanging on that question. But it answers that question in a way that many of us don't consider all that often. And I believe the answer to that question looks a little different than some well-meaning and well-known pastors and teachers have suggested. If we were to trace this thought of the Scriptures and its "role" in the home from Genesis to Revelation (and I use that word "role" guardedly), we would find that it is most often in the context of our instruction and training of children. So this evening, we are going to walk through a series of text in the Old Testament that have something to say to this issue. There is a pattern of passing the gospel along from one generation to the next. This pattern is foreshadowed in the Old Testament. This pattern not only foreshadows church life, but it also informs our home life.

### **Three things to keep in mind**

As we read this passages there are three things to keep in mind. The first is that what will look like the rest of humanity's instinctive habit of storytelling is not the same as the pattern portrayed in Scripture. Ancient storytelling might look like this biblical pattern, but it's different. There are some fundamental differences between what is being described in the inspired text and the oral tradition being handed down from generation to generation. There is a fundamental, even radical, difference between Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and Little Red Riding Hood.

The other thing to keep in mind as we read these texts is more germane to the evangelical context in which we find ourselves: we are not Old Testament Israelites. We do not read or interpret the Old Testament as if we were Old Testament Israelites. And the popular reading of some of the passages we are considering this evening make the fatal mistake of presuming that what we are reading means the same thing as it did to the Israelites, especially those Israelites in the wilderness who were hearing these things for the first time. And all sorts of error, some of it very subtle, can creep into our thinking if we do not continually remind ourselves that we live on this side of the cross and resurrection, we live in the reality of Christ's fulfillment of the Old, and we have a New Testament through which we interpret the Old Testament text.

This evening we are going to consider numerous texts. It would be well worth our time to camp on each of these, but we don't have the time this

evening. This is going to feel like proof-texting. I pray it is not that... what I want us to see is a developing pattern throughout the text, a pattern which not only provides a paradigm for our church life, but informs our family lives as well. It will become quite evident as we consider these texts that the pattern we see is part of a greater story being told.

Turn now to Exodus chapter 10. At the time these events in chapter 10 occurred, what we're going to look at must seem like a passing comment. After more than 400 years in Egypt, Israel is on the brink of leaving Egypt. They have been brutally enslaved by the Egyptians. Their cry has reached the ears of the One True God, Jehovah. The Great I AM appears to Moses on Horeb, the mountain of God, in the burning bush. Moses the Prophet begins proclaiming the name of Jehovah in the grand halls of Egyptian kings and Pharaoh, the Great Oppressor, is defiant. The Great I AM begins to move on behalf of his people, and the judgment of Egypt begins. Up to this point in chapter 10, 7 plagues, all of them making a statement against Egyptian gods that posit themselves against the One True God, have rained down on Egypt. An eighth plague, the locusts, is about to be unleashed. And at the beginning of chapter 10, God pulls back the screen a bit more for Moses, showing him this isn't simply the One True God smacking around the untrue gods for the sport of it. In pulling back the screen, God provides a glimpse at redemptive history:

### **The pattern foreshadowed in the Old Testament**

*Exodus 10:1-2* Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

It's interesting to read the various plagues and read God's interpretation of what he is doing. Each plague comes with a divine interpretation. Again, these aren't simply Bible stories. For one thing, these things really did happen. This is true history. But these events, these stories, didn't happen for our moral fortitude. Unlike the legends and fables, these are not meant to promote virtuous ideals. These plagues provide a lot of drama, a lot of action, but these are not another morality play. God is orchestrating these events in a certain way to reveal something about himself and redemptive history.

More than once in the opening chapters of Exodus, God reminds Pharaoh through Moses that the plagues are being rained down on Egypt "so that

you will know that I am the LORD... so that you will know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth... so that you will know that there is no one like the LORD our God... so that you will know that there is none like me in all the earth... so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.” God doesn’t simply rescue his people. He could have done that. He could have, with one word of judgment, destroyed Egypt and freed his people without any of the drama. He could have simply killed Pharaoh, killed the army, killed the Canaanites, and whisked his people into Canaan minus the drama and its difficulty. It could have happened all at once, instead of the weeks and months of unfolding circumstances. If we were to trace the timeline, Moses return from Midian to the final deliverance of the people took weeks and months.

But that’s not what God chooses to do. What we glean from the divine interpretation of the plagues is that this rescue of God’s people is a rescue of revelation and redemption. This rescue from Egypt is a proclamation that there is no one like God and that God \*will\* get the glory. But God revealing himself through the plagues and the rescue of his people isn’t simply for Pharaoh. When we arrive here at chapter 10, there’s a subtle shift in God’s language as he interprets the plagues. Notice the language of the opening of the account of the locust plague... “so that” (another “so that” which conveys meaning and purpose, reasons for), “so that I may show these signs of mine among them, AND that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians.” This proclamation through plague isn’t simply for the Egyptians, but it is (even more importantly, we will come to find out) for Israel herself. Israel is to watch and listen to the Proclamation and to pass their eyewitness account from generation to generation along with God’s interpretation. While the intent here is primarily about Israel taking notice of God’s judgment of Egypt as a warning in the wilderness about what will happen to them if they serve false gods, our purpose this evening is to take note as to the means of communicating this Proclamation: “tell in the hearing of your son and your grandson”. The proclamation through plague isn’t merely accomplished through Moses returning to the Israelites and telling them what is occurring or even what God is up to. God, through the plagues, is providing a drama and an interpretation of that drama that is to be perpetuated throughout the succeeding generations. This story, God’s story, a redemptive story, is unfolding in front of their eyes and it is to be proclaimed again and again to the children.

This becomes more evident when we get to chapter 12 in the story of the very first Passover. The night of the first Passover still ranks as one of the all time greatest events of all history. Before the night is over, Egypt will be

in national mourning, Israel will be in flight, and when it's all said and done Egypt's mighty military and its Pharaoh will be at the bottom of the Red Sea. In giving instructions about the Passover, God says this in verse 12:

*Exodus 12:12-14* For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.

Here among the instructions is an additional instruction to make the Passover perpetual. Not only notice the judgment theme similar to chapter 10, but here also the redemption theme is to be proclaimed from generation to generation in the Passover meal. The future Passovers would forever be tied to the original Passover. There are further instructions along these lines beginning in verse 23... and again, notice the themes of judgment and redemption:

*Exodus 12:23-27* For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And **when your children say to you**, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but **spared our houses.**' " And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

Embedded in the instructions about the perpetual proclamation of God's redemption of His people and His judgment exacted on the Egyptians is a presumption that a conversation will take place between father and son, between parents and children. And in lieu of this presumption, the proclamation begins to take on very specific language, which we will see again in chapter 13. Even as God, in a very public and dramatic way, is judging Egypt and rescuing Israel, He is providing an interpretation for Israel... and in response to that interpretation the people worship.

And this divine interpretation of the Passover and Exodus event is to be perpetuated in the home, parents to children, using some very specific language. Look at the language used here: It says that the significance of the Passover is that God spared *\*our\** houses. How is it, that an Israelite who is finally in the land of Canaan, sitting down for a Passover meal with his family can say, “God spared *\*our\** houses”, when in fact these parents and their children were not there? Because the reality is that they *\*were\** there. The entire family, through their identity as a nation of Israelites, through the perpetuation of the proclamation, and through the perpetuation of the sacrifice, are participants with the previous generations in the grand story of the Exodus. They, with all of the others who perpetuate this story, are participants in the very same salvation as their forefathers.

This is reinforced in the feast of the unleavened bread that accompanies the Passover meal. In chapter 13, verse 8, God says again:

*Exodus 13:8-16* **You shall tell your son on that day**, ‘It is because of what the LORD did **for me** when I came out of Egypt.’ And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth... (and again in verse 14)... And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the LORD **brought us out of Egypt**, from the house of slavery. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let **us go**, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but **all the firstborn of my sons I redeem**.’ It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the LORD brought **us** out of Egypt.”

Oh, once again there is the grand theme of redemption against the backdrop of judgment, and once again, parents are instructed to tell their children the story of God’s salvation. In the Passover, in the feast of the unleavened bread, the Israelites are be storytellers of God’s redemption of a people for himself, a people that includes *\*them\**, even decades and centuries later. Even though they are in the land of Canaan (years later), parents are to proclaim the great news of God’s rescue over against the backdrop of judgment against the Egyptians. And when those moments come, when the children ask of their parents, “What do we mean by this? What do we mean by the Passover? What is the meaning of this sacrificed lamb its blood around the door?”, this is not a Hans Christian Anderson moment. This isn’t another Tale from the Brothers Grimm. These stories along with their divine interpretation, the proclamation through both act in

the plagues, and divine speech in the proclamation, comes from heaven. No fairy tale or legend ever came down from heaven. Children's stories arise from the culture and the people group in which they are told. Not so with the story of the death angel looking for blood over the doorpost. Not so with the story of the death of the firstborns in Egypt. Not so that the death angel "passes over" "our house". Not so with Israel fleeing in the middle of the night to be led by a pillar of fire into the wilderness. Not so with Israel crossing the Red Sea on dry ground with the Egyptian military in hot pursuit. Not so with the swift flood of the Red Sea sending Pharaoh and his army to a watery grave. That story does not originate with Moses or the people. These dramatic stories pitting the One true God against Egypt's false gods are not an invention of oral tradition, like the rest of humanity's folklore. These dramatic stories told by the firelight in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula are life-giving gospel to the children who hear them.

The story of the Exodus, for these children isn't a Little Red Riding Hood morality play, exhorting them to be careful of the strangers they talk to. No, through the proclamation and sacrifice, these Israelite children hearing the Passover and Exodus story are to see and understand themselves as redeemed of God. Their identity and their destiny has been altered because of \*that\* story. And it is \*that\* story, which will proceed from generation to generation, proclaiming gospel to God's redeemed people.

Fathers are given responsibility to pass the story along to their sons so that what God does on Israel's behalf is not only never forgotten, but lived out in the lives of the Israelites. This top-down, from the heavens proclamation of life-giving history is an affront to every other culture, including our own. In fact, we do all we can, as post-moderns, to remove ourselves from history by creating our own history as we go. Our history is self-made and because it is so, there is no need to find ourselves somewhere in the past. That's not happening here. God is creating history for Israel, and as he reveals himself in the Act of the Exodus and divine speech in interpretation of that event, is creating for himself a redeemed people.

A self-made people is not the way God wanted Israel, especially Israelite children, to think of their history. Israel could never say, "we got out of Egypt on our own." And later generations could never say, "that wasn't 'us'". Israel's posterity was united in word and deed to its forerunners. In the Passover, Israel participated in the original Passover event. The fathers were to say to their sons, "As we partake in the Passover, we partake with those who ate in hushed voices that night with belts around their waists and their feet shod with sandals, awaiting the death angel. When Israel was delivered, we were delivered. When God and his destroyer angel spared

Israel judgment, they spared us judgment. The very fact that we are alive and well in the land that was promised us today, is because \*we\*, in God's grace and mercy, survived the death angel. We, in faith, sacrificed the lamb and put the blood on the doorpost. The blood on the doorpost that appeased God's wrath for Israel is the blood that appeased God's wrath for us. Whatever happened to them that night, happened to us. When they left Egypt, we left Egypt. Israel's salvation is our salvation." In the storytelling, the parent's exodus is the children's exodus. There is a corporate solidarity in the Passover's redemptive history that transcends generations.

As this great and wondrous story is told in the Israelite home, generation after generation until forever are to actualize and participate in the great event in which God kept his promise to Jacob that he would bring a nation out of Egypt and back to the land. Those who are in the land will come to know the Exodus by experiencing the exodus through the slaughter of the lamb and the meal with unleavened bread. The Passover is their heritage. The Passover is their destiny.

40 years later, God reiterates to the generation about to enter the promised land what He had said to those who were rescued from Egypt and subsequently died in the wilderness for, not coincidentally, mimicking the very idolatry that God had judged in Egypt. Turn to Deuteronomy 4... here, as Russ mentioned this morning, Moses is preaching his final sermons to Israel. And embedded in the sermons, again, is this pattern found in Exodus. Beginning at verse 9:

*Deuteronomy 4:9-14* 'Only take care, and **keep your soul diligently**, lest you forget the things that **your eyes** have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. **Make them known to your children and your children's children**— how on the day that **you stood** before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and **that they may teach their children so.**' And **you** came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. Then the LORD spoke to **you** out of the midst of the fire. **You** heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. And he declared to **you** his covenant, which he commanded **you** to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach **you** statutes and rules, that **you** might do them in the land that **you** are going over to possess.

Already, in Israel's young history, Moses is providing example to the pattern. Except for 3 men (Moses, Caleb, and Joshua), this audience is not the audience that experienced the Exodus. That audience has died in the wilderness. But the pronoun Moses uses is "you". Moses speaks to the people as if they had been there themselves.

And notice another addition to the story. Not only is the Passover and the Exodus perpetuated, but now too, the great event at Sinai where God gave his people the Ten Commandments, but more importantly, ratified his covenant with His people. This great story is to be included in what is told to the children. In the Passover there is judgment and sacrifice. In the Exodus, there is salvation and redemption. At Sinai, there is the Law and Covenant. Everything the Israelite child needed to know about his or her identity among the Covenant people of God is wrapped up in those 3 acts, making up one grand event, the salvation of God's people. These three mini-dramas in the big drama called the Exodus provide God's redeemed people with an identity. Even as we see later in the Old Testament Israel disobeying covenant, the prophets of the Old Testament are constantly referring back to these three acts and this one big event, the Exodus, because it is in this story that Israel understands who they are on the world stage, understands the gospel, AND understands their responsibility to their covenanting God.

And this pattern of passing along the Proclamation of God's Act and Interpretation of the salvation of His people from generation to generation is perpetuated in the home. It is the parents' responsibility to make sure that subsequent generations understand their identity and their destiny, and to make sure that the Israelite children understand the stipulations of the covenant God made with His people at Sinai. Israel's occupation of the land, indeed their identity as a people of God, was conditional... the benefits of Canaan could only be enjoyed so long as they obeyed the terms of the covenant. Thus, the very \*life\* and \*destiny\* of every Israelite living in Canaan throughout all ages is tied to the responsibility of perpetuating the grand story of God's redemption of His people. In chapter 6 of Deuteronomy we again find the pattern, only this time, it's not tied to a grand event in history, but the grand catechism and confession of Israel's faith, what Jews call "the shema":

*Deuteronomy 6:4-9* "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to **your children**, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house,

and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. **You shall write them on the doorposts** of your house and on your gates.

As an aside... you don't think the storytelling was without visual effect? What does writing God's story on the doorposts of the house bring to mind? This is a visual cue that the Israelites' identity and indeed their story was bound up with Passover night. The parents' proclamation of the story to their children, day and night, was to be the gospel of the Passover.

And down to verse 20:

*Deuteronomy 6:20-25* **When your son asks you** in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?' then **you shall say to your son**, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought **us** out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before **our** eyes. And he brought **us** out from there, that he might bring **us** in and give **us** the land that he swore to give to **our** fathers. And the LORD commanded **us** to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for **our** good always, that he might preserve **us** alive, as **we** are this day. And it will be righteousness for **us**, if **we** are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD **our** God, as he has commanded **us**.'

This pattern of storytelling to children the great Acts and Interpretation of God, God's great salvation and covenant, has as its aim not simply obedience, but love for God. Storytelling isn't simply about behavior change. Storytelling of God's grand redemption is aimed at the hearts of the people, including the children. Love for God is now included in what is being passed from generation to generation. When children ask of their parents, "what is the meaning of this?", the parents are to say, "We are to love the God who judged the Egyptians and spared our houses. The very God who parted the Red Sea and covenanted with us at Sinai we are to \*love\*."

And notice the all-encompassing language that dominates chapter 6... "you shall love the LORD your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul and with **all** your might... You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a

sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

No part of the Israelite’s life, indeed no part of the child’s life, escapes the redemption storyline. This is a pretty comprehensive picture of home life. The gospel is to be everywhere present. Why? Because this is \*who you are\*. Your obedience and your love for God flow out of what took place that night at Passover, what took place on the dry earth in the middle of the Red Sea, and what took place at the foot of the Sinai mount. It is within these events that Israel is to understand its home life.

The gist of what we have just read is repeated in chapter 11:

*Deuteronomy 11:18-23*“You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth. For if you will be careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the LORD your God, walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him, then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves.

This story is to permeate the home. This story of what God has done for His people and what He requires of them is to be \*everywhere\*. There is to be a Torah-orientation to the Israelite home. Nothing, absolutely nothing, escapes the reaches of God’s redemption and its interpretation in the home. That home exists because God judged the Egyptians. That home exists because God parted the Red Sea and saved Israel out of Egypt. That home exists because God has covenanted with his people to be their God. No part of the Israelite’s life is to be understood apart from and outside of the Passover, the Exodus, and Sinai. In telling the story over and over again, in understanding that story to permeate all of life, this gospel would be perpetuated from generation to generation.

And all along the way, God’s instructions to His people presume that \*that\* kind of conversation \*is\* taking place between parents and children. The language of these passages, “when your son asks you”, presumes that the son will ask and that the parent will have an answer. These passages

presume an ongoing conversation in the home, a conversation that is oriented around the salvation story.

It is this kind of perpetual storytelling that, for the Israelite, is mission critical to their continued blessing and life in Canaan. The warning attached to these passages is... if you disobey, you lose your blessing, you lose your land, and you lose your life! And to keep that from happening... when your son asks you... you tell him that God has judged the Egyptians, has rescued \*him\* from the Egyptians, has led him through the Red Sea, has covenanted with him at Sinai, and has given him a land that is only his if he continues to obey the commandments. The life of every Israelite is to be understood, on a daily basis, through this law and gospel paradigm... God's salvation of and creation of a people... and His requirements for their continued blessing. They are to understand that their continued enjoyment of a land flowing with milk and honey rests on their faithfulness to the covenant. With such a condition on the land, storytelling was a must. If they do not pass the story of judgment and redemption from generation to generation, eventually the blessing and the land will be lost.

Then, at the end of Moses' life... as Israel is on the brink of Canaan, Moses revisits the pattern again... in Deuteronomy 31. Reading this passage you get the sense that this is Moses' final farewell. He is soon going to take that one last walk up Mount Nebo where He will lay down his staff, say goodbye to the people, and move into God's presence forever. Verse 9 of chapter 31:

*Deuteronomy 31:9-13* Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, **and little ones**, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, **and that their children**, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."

Here are all the same familiar themes... however, one detail has been added... this story is to be perpetuated in the reading of the Scriptures. As Moses moves off the scene, as the Exodus becomes a distant memory, as

generations that moved through the wilderness and into Canaan die off, the importance of the Scripture in written form becomes most important. And this Scripture is to be read in the congregation, most interestingly, so that the children will learn to fear the Lord. Again, the perpetuation of Israel's identity rests, in part, with the perpetuation of the Grand Events that brought the nation into existence. And it isn't enough that the children hear it. They must \*know\* it and \*believe it\*. This grand proclamation extends the life of Israel in the land of Canaan through the perpetuation of the story to generation after generation who hear it and believe it in faith.

So what does this pattern mean for us, as we think about Scripture in the home?

## The Pattern in the New Covenant

Turn to Acts (39:39)

*Acts 2:36-40* Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

This of course is Pentecost. At the dawn of a new covenant and the creation of a new people of God, Peter delivers a sermon for the ages in which he unpacks the story of redemption for his audience. Only this time, the redemption story, a story that is Israel's own story, climaxes in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Remember how I said we must remember that we are not Israelites? We must be very careful to distinguish between what is happening in Deuteronomy 6 and Acts 2. The primary thrust of the New Covenant is on the New Covenant family. In fact there is a clue in this text to this fact. The rhythm of the Old Testament generational language is "your son and your son's son" or "your children and your children's children". Here, the promise is for "you and your children" AND, not for your "children's children" as we would expect it to say. But for "all who are far off". The nature of what constitutes "family" in the New Covenant has undergone a radical

change; the primary family unit in the New Covenant is those who have embraced Jesus by faith... and that includes Gentiles who are “far off”.

Peter here places the gospel in terms of promise, a promise that is for nuclear families that are being gathered together into one large family. Thus, the perpetual storytelling that is to be done in the New Covenant is first to be done in the corporate body. We are to tell the stories to each other, our children, and those who are outsiders. Hopefully we are doing that every Sunday, here at the chapel.

Christ is the Grand Event of the Scriptures. Christ is the great Act of Salvation accomplishing the Exodus of His people through his Passover sacrifice. It is Christ who has inaugurated a New Covenant, redeeming for himself, saving for himself, leading out of Egypt for himself, and bringing to life for himself a New Covenant people, the family of God. We must be continually telling that story to each other and to our children. We must be telling that story to those who are “far off” from Jesus. We must be storytellers because it is the Story that gives life.

However, this isn't to say that the nuclear family of Deuteronomy 6 doesn't have anything to say to us in the New Covenant per our families. It does. What is good for the church must be mimicked at home. The church life provides a pattern for family life... the two are both interconnected and inseparable.

For our purposes this evening, I'm not going to jump into this story of Acts... but what I want us to see is this: the promise is for you and your children... this story, this redemption story, this offer of salvation, that culminates in the person of Jesus Christ is not only for you, but for your children. So if we are going to mimic Peter and the New Testament church, we, like Peter in Acts 2, will be telling our children the same redemption story. If you want your children to understand Israel's history and its climax, if you want them to understand the Old Testament and what it's about, if you want them to understand the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament promises, tell them about a Roman cross, a horrific crucifixion, and a person named Jesus Christ. Christ has come and has walked among us. He was crucified by cruel men. And in fact, was crucified by “us”. Therefore, we need to repent and be baptized. This is your history. This can be your children's history by faith. This is your identity. This can be their identity by faith. This is your destiny. This can be their destiny by faith. This is the kind of storytelling which should permeate our homes. This is the kind of storytelling that should provide for a gospel-orientation to the home.

In this New Covenant, the proclamation of the good news story of Jesus Christ is to be perpetuated from generation to generation. Even as we tell the story here in the corporate body, we are to be telling the story in our own homes. The grand Act of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and exaltation in ascension AND interpretation of that event is to be perpetuated among our children.

And this comes up again in Ephesians 6, beginning with verse 1. In the book of Ephesians, Paul has already grounded what he is about to say in Ephesians 6 in the Christ event. For example, husbands are to love their wives, even as Christ has loved the church and given himself for her. Just as the Passover and the Exodus give identity and meaning to the Israelite home, Christ's death and resurrection, and the formation of a new people (one new man, Ephesians 2-3) and a new temple, the church, provide meaning and context for what Paul is saying about the home life. The Christ event not only has everything to do with marriage life, but everything to do with the parent-child relationship.

Ephesians 6:1-4:

*Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents **in the Lord**, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction **of the Lord**.*

Children are to obey "in the Lord". The gospel contextualizes obedience. And notice the last seven words, "the discipline and instruction of the Lord"... those words, along with the promise of living long in the land, are an allusion to Deuteronomy 4, 6, and 11, where Israelite parents are commanded to teach their sons the commands of God in order to live long in the land. Here in the New Covenant, children are to obey their parents in the Lord or in the context of the gospel... Fathers are to bring them up with a gospel orientation via the Scriptures. Children obey and fathers teach diligently, all of it in the context of Christ's life, death, and resurrection on behalf of his people.

In Christ death, resurrection and ascension, we become storytellers of God's redemption of a people for himself, a people that includes us. And in that salvation we have become participants in Christ's death and resurrection. When Christ died, we died. When Christ arose, we were made alive to new life. That is the story we tell to our children. That is the story that permeates our lives. That is Scripture in our homes. Parents are to be storytellers of the good news of Christ's rescue of His people over

against the backdrop of judgment against Satan and sin and death and God's enemies. And when those moments come, when our children ask of us, "What do you mean by this? What do you mean by the Lord's Table? What do you mean by baptism? What do you mean by church?", this is not a Hans Christian Anderson moment. This isn't another Tale from the Brothers Grimm. When they ask us, "what is the meaning of our lives in this home", we then say, "we have a great Emancipator Jesus Christ who, through His death as the Passover Lamb, brought us up out of the land of darkness and delivered us into His kingdom of marvelous light. We are a pilgrim people feeding off of the Manna from heaven, headed to an Eternal Canaan with the One who redeemed us."

What stories are we telling our children? This great story of Jesus Christ and His salvation offered to our children in the New Covenant, this proclamation through act in the resurrection and divine speech in His Word, does not arise from our culture. This story does not originate in our community. This story, an actual event in history, comes down from heaven, and not only does it come down from heaven, it comes to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ. Oh what a story, a story that dwarfs any Disney movie or fairy tale. This grand story resident in our Savior Jesus Christ is not an invention of oral tradition, but comes from heaven bringing life to our community and life to our families. This story which is to permeate our families is life-giving gospel.

### **Questions to ask:**

So what does this look like in the home? What does it mean for Scripture to be in the home? What does it mean for our homes to be Word-oriented and gospel-saturated?

One thing we're not going to do this evening is make a checklist. It would be very easy to come up with a checklist for making sure that our homes are Scripture homes. As I already have mentioned, we have to be careful that we don't pull the Old Testament paradigm directly into the New Covenant. There are some groups and ministries and churches that do this in their emphasis on family worship.

But we could come up with a checklist. If you're a good evangelical, you know the list. Devotions with the family. Check. Bible memorization with the kids. Check. Catechizing the kids from a confession or statement of faith. Check. Watching Bible movies with the kids. Check. It's very easy to externalize a list of things to do with Scripture in the home, and then think, "hey, we're doing that." We have to be careful that we are not creating another generation of legalists. And lists of activities, however

### **Conclusion**

proper and helpful those activities are in the spiritual development of our children, lend themselves toward legalism. We could have family devotions every night of the week and still miss what it means to have Scripture in the home.

Instead, I've proposed a series of questions that should be helpful for us in thinking about Scripture in the home. Cognizant of the fact that the primary family unit in the New Covenant is the church family, first we should ask ourselves, how are we, as a church, passing along the faith to the next generation? How are we doing as a body? Are we telling the story, over and over again? Are our flocks places where we are impressing on each other the gospel? Do we see the gospel as a means of perpetuating the life of this community? Is there an all-permeating sense of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension to our flock life? Is that where we find our identity and destiny as a body here at the Chapel?

Secondly, how are we as families within the larger family, passing the faith along? Are we constantly telling the story? Making Scripture central in the home \*means\* telling the story over and over and over to our kids. Does the gospel permeate life in the home? 1 Timothy 3 says the sacred writings make us wise unto salvation. Is there an all-permeating sense to the gospel in our homes?

You may wonder what this looks like. Can our children both see and hear the gospel in our lives? Do they see their parents living out the gospel? Are we consciously allowing ourselves to be molded into Christ's image through the scriptures? Do our kids see us intentionally pursuing Christ's glory? That's scripture in the home. Do they hear their parents telling the gospel? That's scripture in the home.

Scripture in the home may be formal catechizing of your children. It may not. It may be a family devotional time... notice I didn't say worship... it may not be that. The sense of Scripture in the home is a gospel orientation to it. What do the kids see from Scripture in my life and do I talk about it? This popular slogan purportedly from St. Francis of Assisi (and he didn't say it) is bogus: go and preach the gospel; use words if necessary. That's nonsense. The gospel involves verbal proclamation... and in fact, it is not the gospel if the verbal is not present.

The Scripture's place in the home is the same as the church's place in the home. I must be asking myself: is the scripture shaping the home life? Am I allowing our family life to be shaped by the gospel? Am I allowing the Scriptures to dictate values for my family life? And do I communicate those things to my kids on a regular basis? Do I routinely and matter-of-factly talk

about the Scriptures and redemptive history to my kids? What is my reaction, both in deed and in word, to crisis? How do I respond when wronged? What am I telling my kids about being wronged? What are the words I use in times of discipline? When Luke takes a swing at his sister, Ephesians 6:4 looks like this: Luke, Christ died for that swing. Christ died for that feeling of contempt for your sister. Embrace Jesus. When Noelle gets upset with her brother, is my response, "Oh Noelle, child of the covenant, you are Christ's. You have Christ living in you... embrace Him and in doing so embrace your brother. How often am I taking my family to the cross? How often am I telling them the life-changing, life-transforming story from the Scriptures in a gospel-oriented way?

And just as the Scriptures give life to the community, as we bring the Scriptures and the Gospel to bear on the home... the home will be sustained in the life given it from above...

*Deuteronomy 8:1-10* "The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

Oh... how often are we feeding our families with the Manna from heaven? How often are we feasting on Jesus in the home? All of the questions we need to be asking ourselves flow out of the reality that the Scriptures give us life. As we bring the Scriptures to bear on all sorts of life situations, as

we tell the grand story of Jesus and His salvation and redemption of a people, we bring Manna, the Bread of Life, into the home for the nourishment of our family's life.