

**Date** : 24 September 2023

**Topic** : Passing the Torch: Teaching God's Statutes and Judgments to the Next Generation

**Key Passage:** Deuteronomy 4:1-43

**Key Verses** : Deuteronomy 4:9

**And teach them to your children and your grandchildren**

**Key Words** : Observe and Teach

In today's world, parents face significant challenges arising from secular culture, competing worldviews, and the distractions of digital devices and social media, work demands, school pressures and peer influence. This adds to the complexities of passing down faith to the next generation.

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses stresses the importance of addressing challenges by grounding the family in God's teachings. To overcome them, parents must commit to teaching and practicing God's teaching, instilling the same commitment in their children. This extends beyond learning; it involves actively teaching the next generation to ensure continuity of their covenantal relationship with God.

Moses provides specific instructions on what to teach and how to teach effectively, emphasizing that God desires not only for us to be learners but also teachers, equipping our children to teach their children. This way, we pass on these invaluable teachings from one generation to the next, attaining the rich inheritance God prepared for them.

## 1. Why is this instruction so pivotal?

- a) Scripture subsequently records for us the consequences that ensued when they failed, and subsequent generations also failed.
- b) The principle is simple: Faith continuity ceases the day our children stop teaching and observing it.
- c) Churches in many nations died out when they failed to do so.

## 2. What to observe and teach the next generation

*Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. Deuteronomy 4:1*

- **Observe – Preserve the Integrity of God's Word** Deuteronomy 4:2

*You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.*

- Be faithful to the principle of God's commandment. Do not dilute or alter them. Therefore, learn to identify exactly what is stated.
- A careful and attentive consideration of God's teachings, understanding the reasons behind them, recognising their significance, and applying them in life.

- **Teaching** – God's statutes and judgments, explaining their meaning, significance, and practical applications of in daily life.

### i) Teach God's Covenant relationship of love Deuteronomy 4:1

- **Significance of God's Covenant of Love**

- The Covenant serves as a safeguard: ensuring that we receive the inheritance God has promised to us Deuteronomy 4:20
- God desires nearness to us through the Covenant, demonstrating His unwavering care and fostering a unique and exclusive bond Deuteronomy 4:7

## ii) Teach God's statutes and judgments *Deuteronomy 4:1, 14*

*And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess.*

- **The Ten Commandments** (*Deuteronomy 5:6-21*) as a central set of moral statutes. Additionally, they encompass principles of love for God and neighbour, forgiveness, sexual purity, care for the vulnerable, restitution, truthfulness, and the protection of life (*the sanctity of human life*)

## iii) Teach the fear of the Lord *Deuteronomy 4:10*

*Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.*

- **Today, reverence for God is hardly spoken of as a value to pursue.**

### **Why should reverence for God be taught?**

- **God is Lord** *Deuteronomy 4:32-35*

*For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, .... To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord Himself is God; there is none besides Him.*

Moses explains to the Israelites how God demonstrates His Lordship through extraordinary deeds – signs, wonders and deliverance from Egypt – setting Himself apart as the one true Lord apart and above all nations and creation.

- **God is a Consuming Fire** *Deuteronomy 4:23-24*

*Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God*

- **Teach what is the fear of the Lord?**

- **Awe and reverence**

- Holy fear of falling short, desire to align with His Holiness
- Private life - make choices that align with God's values and holiness.

- **Acknowledging His supreme rule** as the ultimate ruler and decision-maker

- Avoiding rebellion against His authority but:

- Submit to His will
- Obey His statutes
- Worship Him in spirit and in truth

- **Teach His Judgement**

### **Consequences of idolatry (making and worshipping idols)** *Deuteronomy 4:15-16*

*... lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure ...*

- **Curse of idol worshipping** *Deuteronomy 4:26-28*

- Loss of inheritance (*exile*), shortened lifespans, destruction of faith and relationships, and forced scattering with few survivors

- **Syncretism:** Mixing Biblical truths with elements from other religious teaching. Eg Observing horoscopes, practicing feng shui, ancestor worship.

### 3. How to teach God's statutes and judgments effectively

#### i) Teach God's judgment to illustrate with stories

*(Real-life, testimonies, personal experiences)*

- The story of Baal-Peor *Deuteronomy 4:3*
- The Horeb Experience of the first generation *Deuteronomy 4:10-20*
- The story of Moses *Deuteronomy 4:21-22*

#### ii) Teach the benefits: Value and blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience *Deuteronomy 4:40*

*You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."*

- Moses highlights great benefits of obeying God's commandments and living by His statutes and judgments. These benefits serve as both practical advantages and powerful testimonies to other nations. *Deuteronomy 4:6-8*
  - Wisdom in decision-making; comfort, guidance with His presence; direct access to God through prayer; powerful testimony to others

#### iii) Teach measures to avoid forgetting *Deuteronomy 4:9*

*Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen*

Despite seeing and experiencing great miracles, the Israelites still forgot about the teaching and commandments of God over time.

- **Relate to everyday life**
  - Connect Biblical principles to real-life situations  
*eg situation in your child encounter, teach forgiveness and repentance*
  - Encourage questions:  
*eg ask questions "How can we apply this commandment in our daily lives?"*
- **Repetition and Review**
  - Memorise / Review key Bible verses that emphasize God's Statutes and Judgments
- **Reproduce**
  - Teach others - Get the children to teach their children. This is the most critical step in ensuring continuation of the faith down your bloodline.

#### iv) Nurture the hearts: Igniting wholehearted commitment and faith *Deuteronomy 4:9*

*.... and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.*

Despite witnessing great miracles, hearts can grow cold over time, causing us to drift from God's teachings

- **Teach the heart behind the commandments**
  - God's commandments are rooted in His love for us.
  - Discuss the underlying principles of each commandment, emphasizing God's desire for our well-being and flourishing.

- **Cultivate gratitude**
  - Gratitude journaling – practice gratitude and humility
- **Pray and meditate of God's Word**
  - Encourage children to pray for a heart that desires to obey God.
- **Practise forgiving others**
  - Celebrate acts of obedience and kindness
  - Encourage children to show love and empathy towards others.

**v) Model faithful living** *Deuteronomy 4:8*

*And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?*

- The Israelites serve as an example to other nations when they lived out and follow God's statutes and righteous judgments faithfully
- Observe and live according to God's statutes and judgments
  - Power of teaching with conviction
  - Let your children see your faith in action through your words and deeds
  - Set an example for conviction.

**Applications:**

What steps can you take to model a life of faithful obedience to God's commands so that the next generation sees the relevance and blessings of following His statutes?