

Small Group Guide

“We Shape”

Deuteronomy 6:5-9 and Psalm 78:5-8, 51-54

Message Summary

On a day when parents of new children were commissioned to parent in God-honoring ways and to raise their children in the ways of the Lord, John Tice, Brook Hills' Children's Minister, focused this sermon in particular application to parents. The overarching premise is the equation of presence + observation + time = impression. For better or for worse, parents shape their children. Therefore, who we are as parents will have a profound influence on our children. However, God did not leave parents without instruction. Jesus is the pattern for how we live, and God's Word instructs us in how to follow Him. When we believe the truth of God's Word and seek to follow it, we must live our faith honestly and authentically before our children, aligning all that we are to His Word so that we can confidently call them to imitate us. Two foundational principles of parenting are born out of Scripture's call to raise children according to God's Word: being present with children and **raising children who are adult followers of Christ.**

Discussion & Application Questions

*After briefly reviewing the message summary, use these questions to further examine the sermon and to discuss how these truths apply to daily life, so we can “be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (Jas. 1:22). Based on your knowledge of the people in your small group, **select the questions that will best help you frame the group's discussion** of this sermon and sermon text.*

1. In the sermon, John Tice noted, “Presence + Observation + Time = Impression.” How does Deuteronomy 6:5-9 instruct older generations to utilize the opportunities given to them in a way that makes a godly impression on children and younger generations?
2. In Deuteronomy 6:5-9, who had the responsibility for discipling the children of Israel? What does this passage indicate about the role and value of the family unit?
3. For parents, in what ways have you considered your role as the primary disciple-maker of your children?
4. **Application:** If you are not a parent or no longer have children in the home, how can you support families in your small group or church? How can you get involved in reaching younger generations and making a godly impression on them?
5. **Application:** Considering the Presence + Observation + Time = Impression equation, how do we use that life observation to increase the impact that God's impression on our life has? How can we use it to influence the impression we want to make on others, such as children, grandchildren, co-workers, etc.? What next step do you need to take as you contemplate this equation and its application to your life?

S - Son and Scripture

6. Read Matthew 7:24-27. As followers of Christ, what (or who) is the solid foundation that will not crack or shift when the difficulties of life come?

7. What does this passage indicate about the “easiness” of the Christian life?
8. When others see us turn to Christ when we face difficulties, what do they observe about God? About us? About faith?
9. **Application:** As parents, how do we balance the task of allowing our children to see how we cling to Christ during struggles with the need to help them feel secure? Why is it important that they see some of our honest struggles so that they can see the reality of and imperative nature of Jesus as our foundation? What are appropriate ways to share with them or let them see your honest struggles?
10. Because Christ is the foundation of His followers’ lives, He is to be the foundation of everything that flows out of the lives of His children. What happens when we don’t fully submit to Christ in every area of our lives? How does that affect our children or those we are disciplining?

H - Honest

11. Read Deuteronomy 6:5-9. What is the relationship between verses 5-6 and 7-9? How do verses 5-6 give a picture of someone whose devotion to God and obedience to Him overflow from a deep relationship?
12. What does it mean to love God with one’s heart, mind, soul, and body?
13. **Application:** How do we develop this kind of whole-hearted relationship with God? What can you do as a next step to grow in your love for God?
14. Are followers of Christ still to obey God even when they don’t feel like it? Are we still living authentically if we act out of discipline rather than wanting to obey in the moment or being excited about obeying?
15. How can we evaluate if our faith is authentic or just going through traditional motions?
16. **Application:** How do our children know if our faith is honest or if we are just pretending? As parents, how do we demonstrate an authentic, honest faith in front of our children, teaching them that everything we do is a demonstration of our love for the Lord?

A - Aligned

17. Look at Titus 2:1-12. Thinking about these verses, what does the common adage mean that God loves us how we are but doesn’t want us to stay this way?
18. What do these verses indicate about God’s perspective on sin in our lives? What is the purpose of this kind of “training” as verse twelve calls it?
19. **Application:** Read Galatians 5:22-24. Using these descriptions of a fruitful Christian life, is there anything in your life that is not aligned with Christ and who we are as His followers? If so, what can you do to address this area and to change?

P - Present

20. Looking at Deuteronomy 6:7, 20, what do these verses assume about the relationship between a parent and child?
21. What impact does physical presence and interaction make in any relationship?
22. **Application:** Consider one personal hindrance to giving your full and undivided attention to your children, friends, spouse, etc. How can you begin to eliminate that hindrance and create more intentional face-to-face time?

E – Expected

23. In Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78, what was the expectation of parents concerning the law of God?
24. Looking at verse six, what was the long-term goal of such generational discipleship?
25. How does it change our parenting philosophy and actions when we consider that parenting looks ahead to the long game instead of just the short-term? What does it mean to raise an adult instead of raising a child?
26. **Application:** How could this same idea translate into our discipleship relationships and goals?

Things to Consider

If you have people in your group **who did not hear the sermon**, read the sermon text (Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Psalm 78:5-8, 51-54) together and briefly summarize the main points of the sermon. Recapping the sermon text and sermon outline can also be a helpful way to start the group, even if everyone did hear the sermon.

Although the focus of today’s sermon was driven toward parents, the foundational call to be a people who build our foundation on the rock of Christ instead of the fleeting sand of anything less than Christ is a call to all people, regardless of parental status. There are many people in this world who have no children on this earth but who are rich in spiritual children. There are others whose children are no longer in their care. No matter the situation, God calls His people to shape the world around them as salt and light; there are no qualifiers in this.

As a single man with no children, Paul continually encouraged the readers of his letters to imitate him. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, he leaves no doubt as to why he could make what may seem to us a quite prideful statement. “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Paul, who called himself the chief of sinners was not unaware of his own sinfulness. However, he strove to live as Christ and could, therefore, call his readers to imitate him.

As Christians who profess Christ as the one true God, people are watching us at all times. This is especially true of parents as well. **Are we walking in a way in which we can confidently call our children or those who watch us to imitate us because we are imitating Christ?**

For parents with children in the home, encourage one another to spend some time this week to write down several spiritual goals that you have as a parent and that you desire for your children. For each goal consider at least two action steps that you can begin to take to reach these milestones. If time permits in this meeting, invite a volunteer to name one goal and begin the process together.

For others, you could do the same thing mentioned for parents in the paragraph above but for those you disciple, or you can go for coffee or send an email to a trusted friend (or several) this week and invite for his/her input about areas that are not aligned with who we are as Christ followers. If you already know of an area, admit the weakness and ask for prayer and accountability. When God has helped you identify one specific area in which you need His transformation, write out one way you can begin to move toward Him this week.

As a group, are there ways for your group to serve families, such as the WRAP ministry, preschool ministry, or just help one another with date nights to encourage healthy marriages? How can your group come alongside other families in our church and pray for them during group time (particularly the parents who were just commissioned)?

Weekly Prayer Focus

Pray for Our Church:

- Praise God for the gift of children in our faith family.
- Pray for parents to faithfully point children to their Heavenly Father.
- Pray for children to know Christ and to grow into servants of God.
- Pray for parents to discipline children in love and in the fear and instruction of God.

Pray for Our City:

- Pray for the ministry of WorkFaith Birmingham, a Christ-centered non-profit workforce preparation and life development ministry.
- Pray for 16th Street Baptist Church and Pastor Arthur Price.

Pray for Our World:

- Pray for Brook Hills long-termer Jessica S., as she is serving as part of the Brook Hills North Africa Church Planting Team among the Arundo people.