

FAMILY MATTERS: INVESTING IN THE THINGS THAT LAST

Untying the Knots in Your Family's Air Hose

Deuteronomy 6:1–14



LET'S BEGIN HERE

“If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a thousand times!” How many times did we hear that growing up? How often have we said that—or something like it—to our own children? It’s funny, but no matter how bright we were as children or how intelligent we are as adults, it often takes a “thousand” reminders before the truth sinks in. That’s one reason God placed us within families—to prepare us for the world, even if it takes hearing the truth “a thousand times.” And few methods are better suited to unclogging our ears than an honest evaluation of ourselves and our families.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Let's Take a Family-Life Quiz

It's easy to become consumed with the petty distractions of life that direct our focus inward rather than outward, threatening to destroy our families. We need an opportunity to reevaluate just how well our families are doing. Here are some topics and questions to help.

Flexibility and freedom. Do openness, vulnerability, and a willingness to be flexible exist within your family? Does an atmosphere of freedom exist where new thoughts and ideas are encouraged and discussed, even if they tend toward the unusual or strange?

Affirmation and appreciation. How positive is your family's outlook on life? How valued does each member of the family feel? Are there put-downs, cutting sarcastic remarks, or ugly name calling? Or is your home filled with “thank you” and “pleases” and “I love you”?

Maturity and stability. When family emergencies arise, do you solve them together? Are you even-keeled, or do you fly off the handle? Are you a firmly planted tree that your family can find shelter in when storms rage, or are you a sapling easily bent and broken?

Integrity and character. How highly do you value truth-telling, ethical standards, hard work, keeping your word, and honoring your commitments? Is your word your bond? Can your family and others “take it to the bank” just because you said so?



Quotable

*Is your family
supportive?
Do you give
hugs, kisses,
and words of
encouragement?*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Love and commitment. How loyal is your family? Do you stand up when a family member is criticized, sick, or hurt? Do you show support by attending each other's band concerts, plays, and games? Do you touch each other with hugs and kisses and speak words of encouragement?

Yearly activities and traditions. Do you have certain holiday traditions that enrich your family life? Do you celebrate birthdays or anniversaries every year? What milestones do you and your family mark year in and year out?

Leadership. How fair and consistent is the leadership in your home? Do you work with your spouse, or do your parents work together to ensure that strong but just discipline occurs? Do you take responsibility for what takes place within the family?

Interest in spiritual things. Does your family express authentic devotion to Christ? Does your family seek to glorify God? Is God's Word honored? Is prayer an important part of your family's life? Is corporate worship a regular part of your family's life?

Fun, leisure, and relaxation. Do you have fun together? Will the walls of your home echo with the memories of laughter? Do your children and their friends like to spend significant time in your home? Or is your home a place of legalism, demands, and unrealistic expectations?

Expressiveness and openness in communication. Do you talk openly, or do you have to guard and measure your words? Is there transparency and freedom in conversation? Do you really listen when others are talking? Do you work out disagreements with civility and love?

2. Let's Seek God's Truth for Some Answers (Deuteronomy 6:4–13)

Moses emphasized four eternal truths that remain just as applicable for our families today as they were for the ancient Israelite families that stood before him on that day.

The first eternal truth is meant to arrest our attention: *hear the truth continually*. In Deuteronomy 6:4–5, as the Israelites prepared to enter the idol-ridden Promised Land, Moses called the Israelites to hear and believe that Yahweh is Elohim, the only LORD, the great "I AM" of the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). And the Israelites were, uniquely, His chosen ones. We need the same reminder today because we live in a culture of pseudo-gods which constantly woo us and our families into the idolatry of fat bank accounts and flat abs.

The second eternal truth in Deuteronomy 6:5–6 is meant to capture our affections: *love the Lord fervently*. We belong to God, the Master of all that is visible and invisible, and we owe Him our complete devotion and worship. The temptation of familiarity and indifference is a struggle for many who grew up in Christian homes or who are rearing their children in Christian homes.



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The third eternal truth is meant to direct our responsibility: *teach the young diligently*. Truth must first reside in our hearts and minds before we can teach truth to our children. So there is an assumption, even on the part of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:6–7, that we will obey God and learn to love Him passionately before we attempt to pass these truths on to the next generation.

The fourth eternal truth is meant to focus our reverence: *fear the Lord greatly*. Standing on the precipice of great blessing, Moses delivered a stern warning: “watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you . . . out of . . . slavery. You shall fear only the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 6:12–13). The Israelites were about to occupy fertile lands they had not worked and luxurious homes they had not built (6:10–11). When we are given much, without working for the good we enjoy, we must be wary. The subtle sins of indulgence, indifference, and independence from God are crouching at our doors. The only defense against these sins is reverence for the Lord.



LET'S LIVE IT

No responsibility is weightier for parents or grandparents than teaching our young ones the truths of God's Word. As Moses made clear, teaching children is not a once-for-all-time event; rather, it is a process spanning a lifetime. Obviously, children should know as many biblical lessons as possible, but the foundational truths of the Bible are really quite few. Here are three.

First, *the fear of God will restrain your family from presumption and pride — cultivate it*. Because too little is understood or appreciated, too little is said in Christian homes about this significant truth. Let's change that in our families, and let's begin today.

Second, *the worship of God will equip your family with strength and stability — participate in it*. Some parents have come to the conclusion that they don't want to “impose” their religious beliefs on their children, so they don't teach their children the Bible or take them to church. These parents want to allow their children to decide for themselves whether or not they want to bother with all this God stuff.

Third, *the name of God will give your family identity and security — repeat it*. In a culture surrounded by the false gods of beauty, wealth, and power, do our families stand out as worshipers of Yahweh Elohim?

What do you think it means that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7)? What does fearing the LORD look like in your marriage or family life? Read Deuteronomy 6:7 and then read Ephesians 6:4. Are these suggestions or commands? How can you apply these passages in your marriage or family life?



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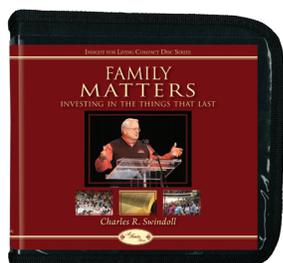
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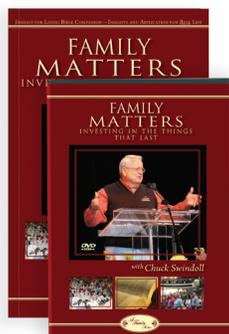
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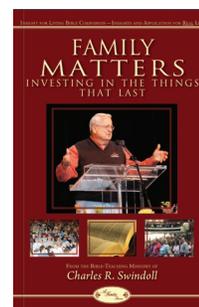
Tools for Digging Deeper



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