

# First Commandment, Part 1

## Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, March 1, 2026

### I. Introduction

Imagine standing on the plains of Moab. The Jordan River is in front of you. The land of promise is just beyond that. You are excited to take dominion of the land, but you aren't 100% sure of everything involved in that. But, no worries. Moses is giving specific blueprints for how to build a godly civilization in that land. He explains why Canaan's civilization was self-defeating, but promises that if they implement these blueprints that he is about to give them, they would have multi-generational success in the land. Talk about an exciting vision. This chapter and the chapters that will follow will give incredibly practical wisdom to Israel on how to flourish in the land.

You may remember that I demonstrated in a previous sermon that the ten commandments in chapter 5 form an outline for the rest of the book. Starting in chapter 6 he will deal with each of the ten commandments in the order that they were given, and give an extended exposition of the *implications* of each commandment. The exposition of the first commandment starts in this chapter and goes all the way through to the end of chapter 11. That's a lot of space devoted to the first commandment. But, you know what? We need all of those chapters because God knows that there are so many subtle ways in which we can put other things ahead of God. And this first summary statement shows how homeschooling can be a key to avoiding that and a key to passing on a passionate devotion to our children and our grandchildren. But it isn't automatic; not all homeschooling succeeds.

In this paragraph, Moses starts with the heart, moves to the home, and ends with the gates of the city. It illustrates God's comprehensive claims over all of life.

As you can see from the outline, I have divided the passage up into three sections that cover right living, right loving, and right learning. They all kind of bleed into each other, so those aren't water-tight divisions, but I think they are helpful divisions. So let's begin with right living.

### II. Right living (vv. 1-3)

#### A. Right living begins with right thinking (v. 1)

Verse 1 says, "Now this is the commandment, *and* these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess..." The commandment singular is the first commandment, and the statutes and judgements are all the case laws that are inherent in and logically flow from that first commandment. He will lay out those statutes and judgments in chapters 6-11. Every one of those chapters is expanding on the meaning of the first commandment.

If we believe the first commandment - that nothing should displace God in our hearts or lives, then we must presuppose the ontological Trinity and His revelation in all that we do. As Dr. Greg Bahnsen pointed out, right living begins with having a right worldview, and a right worldview must have right presuppositions. And all of our presuppositions must come from God's Word.

And I want you to notice in verse 1 that teaching God's revelation *precedes* taking dominion. The American frontier myth (and it is a myth) was that America's rugged founders settled the land first and then structured society later. But let me tell you - the Pilgrims and Puritans would have laughed at that concept. They knew that you can't properly take dominion without *first of all* having a consistent worldview. Most of our founding fathers in the colonies had a very well-developed Biblical worldview *before* they even came to this land. And the same was true with Israel. God did not give them a tract of land and then tell them to try figure out how it works on their own (using so-called "natural law"). He first gave them a comprehensive worldview and then told them to live that worldview out in the land.

The point is that the first commandment requires that we school our children in a comprehensive worldview that would prepare them to go out into the world and not have the world take dominion of them. And that's hard. There were days when Kathy and I homeschooled our kids poorly. There were days when the vision felt heavy. But the question we kept asking was, "What will this look like in twenty, thirty, or forty years?" As we move through this passage we are going to see that the focus is on the home as the seedbed of the kingdom. It is thus critical that you parents know how to teach your children so that there will be a multi-generational legacy that you can pass on.

## B. The three goals for right living (v. 2)

In verse 2 God goes on to give them three goals for right living: "...that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged." Let's break that down a bit. You may not be able to see it quite as clearly in the English, but the reason I described verse 2 as having three goals for right living" is because commentators point out that in the Hebrew grammar there are three "purpose clauses in this sentence... marked by the particle 'āšer."<sup>1</sup> So there are three goals he encourages you to have in your homeschooling. The three goals are: 1) developing a fear and loyalty to the Lord in our children, 2) secondly, to help the next generation to live out God's Word in a way that is consistent with that fear and loyalty, 3) and thirdly, to give the next generation the tools needed so that they will prosper in the land.

Let's look at the fear of the Lord first. We saw last week that when we catch a glimpse of God's glory, it produces godly fear within His people that makes us want to be loyal to God

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<sup>1</sup> Bill T. Arnold, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, Chapters 1–11, ed. E. J. Young et al., *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2022), 374.

and to worship God with everything that is in us. When you see *parents* who have that, but it is not being passed on to the children, there are probably some steps in these nine verse verses (and perhaps in the rest of chapters 6-11) that are missing in their homeschooling. Too much homeschooling is content with passing on academics. Now, God is going to say a lot about academics in this book. We don't knock academics. But it's not enough that your children become brilliant academically. There are a lot of brilliant atheists out there whom God would call fools. Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." It doesn't matter how brilliant that atheist may be in his philosophy, when he doesn't start with God, His worldview is unsustainable. And in the Apologetics Conference this Spring we will see why every pagan worldview is internally inconsistent and unsustainable. One verse in Proverbs tells us that the fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of knowledge, and another verse tells us that the fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom. So last week's sermon on the fear of the Lord that resulted from seeing His glory is a critical foundation to this whole chapter. I'm not going to repeat what I said last week. But here's how Dr. Greg Bahnsen worded it in an article I found on the *Answers In Genesis* website. He said,

The Christian's final standard, the inspired Word of God, teaches us that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). If the apologist treats the starting point of knowledge as something other than reverence for God [which I will add that Classical Apologetics does - it starts on the supposedly neutral natural ground of the unbeliever, and tries to argue from the natural to the supernatural - but the most you can prove that way is a finite god - but I shouldn't interrupt the quote. Bahnsen said, "If the apologist treats the starting point of knowledge as something other than reverence for God"], then unconditional submission to the unsurpassed greatness of God's wisdom at the end of his argumentation does not really make sense. There would always be something greater than God's wisdom - namely, the supposed wisdom of one's own chosen, intellectual starting point. The Word of God would necessarily (logically, if not personally) remain subordinate to that autonomous, final standard.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, if God is not your starting point, He will never be your conclusion. Autonomous man always uses his own mind to judge God and the truth of God's Word - which makes man the judge of God rather than God being the judge of man. So Moses *starts* with the fear of God in verse 2. The fear He is talking about is not mere dread; it is a reverent allegiance to God that gives *the* basis for an antithesis between the world's way of thinking and acting and our way of thinking and acting. The more we fear God, the less we will fear man. In fact, the bigger God is in our minds (the whole point of the last section of chapter 5), the smaller the opposition will appear to be. It will give you faith. We face giants in the land today, but Moses wants us to have the faith that Joshua had when he led Israel across the Jordan River and into the land. And it starts with the fear of the Lord.

So why is this paragraph dealing with homeschooling? I believe that it is in part the best environment to develop that fear of God and loyalty to God's Word in our children. God's

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<sup>2</sup> <https://answersingenesis.org/apologetics/autonomy-is-no-ladder-to-christs-supreme-authority/>

concern is to establish a multi-generational legacy. He speaks of His focus being not just on the adults, but also on “...you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life...” This is covenant theology on steroids. It is the antithesis of the rugged individualism of the American ideal. God isn’t just the Lord of the individual; He is the Lord of our family multi-generationally. Let me use an illustration of what a difference long-term vision can make. Medieval cathedral builders laid foundations for magnificent church buildings knowing full well that they themselves would not be alive to see the spires completed. Why would they start on something they knew they would never finish? It’s because they had a Biblical long-term vision. They worked for their children and their grandchildren. Moses was thinking that way when he spoke of “you, and your son, and your grandson.” Covenant obedience has a long-term architectural perspective in mind. It is not impulsive. It is living for the future, training for the future, and sacrificing for the future. If the prolife movement would embrace this mindset, it wouldn’t bother them whether or not a good bill is achievable right now. They would do what the Scripture commands irrespective of *when* God gives us success. Like those cathedral builders, they should be laying foundations right now with the full confidence that a future generation will see the spires of success down the road - in part because we have been faithful *now*. And Psalm 78 picks up on this language of multi-generational fear and obedience to God’s law and hugely expands on it. It shows that this is a principle that all Christians need to embrace at all times and in all countries.

But the third goal in verse 2 was giving sufficient Biblical tools to the next generation “that your days may be prolonged.” We will be seeing some of those essential tools in later weeks. But what does He mean by the phrase, “that your days may be prolonged”? He’s not just talking about *individuals* living a long time. Individuals can die young and yet still be able to instill a cathedral-building-long-term vision in their children and grandchildren. It was so that *Israel’s* days may be prolonged in the land. This is a *covenantal* promise; a *multi-generational* promise. The short-term strategies of the church in America are aimed at success right now, but are neglecting America’s long-term blessing. And without the Biblical tools that Deuteronomy will lay down in the rest of this book, there can be no long-term blessing on America. So verse 2 gives the three goals of right living.

### C. The stated outcome for right living (v. 3)

Verse 3 expands on that last goal when it gives the stated *outcome* for right living: “Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you — ‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’” Before he states the outcome, he repeats the imperatives “hear” and “be careful to observe it.” If we want things to go well for us, we need to listen up to God’s admonitions in the Word and we need to observe them. And throughout this book he will keep repeating those conditions.

But when we do so, God’s promised outcome is that things would go well for Israel and they would multiply greatly. There are two phrases that highlight the benefits of embracing a God-centered worldview and practice. The first is that it may be well with you, and the second is that they would inherit a land flowing with milk and honey - a poetic expression for the abundance of provision God would give them. But, let me hasten to say that unlike

the “name it and claim it” Pentecostals or the “health and wealth” Pentecostals, this does not mean that God will necessarily give us everything we *want*, but it does mean that He will give us everything we need for taking dominion. After all, we have been placed on this earth to serve *His* purposes, not our own. If obedience automatically meant health and wealth, then Job (the most righteous man on earth in *his* day), would not have gotten sick, and Jesus (the most righteous man of *all* time) would have been wealthy - but he had next to nothing. But Jesus had everything he needed to accomplish God’s will. Bill Arnold points out that this is a recurring promise in Deuteronomy, and that God consistently makes this promise contingent upon the people’s right relationship to God and submission to His covenant.<sup>3</sup>

Now, as a sidenote, having large families is a blessing if all the principles of verses 1-9 are daily exemplified in the family, but they are a curse if the kids run wild. God’s promise is conditioned on maintaining a Biblical worldview - which again, involves a right interpretation of what is real (metaphysics), and right thinking (epistemology), but also a right living (ethics) - the three topics of our Spring Conference. It is then and only then that the promise of “milk and honey” (or spiritual prosperity) is the outcome. But don’t forget that having large families is one of God’s rich blessings that He promises to those who love Him. To not want to have children is extremely present-oriented and completely undermines the vision of this chapter.

### III. Right loving (vv. 4-5)

So verses 1-3 deal with right living that flows from right thinking. But verses 4-5 moves on to right loving. Huh! Interesting. Love too must be defined by *God*, not man. *Everything* in our worldview must be defined by God, and not man. He is not talking about autonomous love, or sentimental love, or any other man-made definition of love. Here is a definition that I think fits all the Scriptural verses on love. “Love is the Spirit-wrought, covenantal affection and commitment by which we delight in God above all else and thus seek our neighbor’s true good according to God’s law, to the glory of God.”

#### A. God as the focus of our love - the Shema (v. 4)

Verse 4 gives us the God-centered focus of love. This verse is often called the Shema, or the Shema Israel, with *shema* being the Hebrew word for “hear.” It was the most basic creed of Israel. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” This verse reminds us that God must be the laser focus of our love and devotion. Jews think they are fulfilling this verse by putting a Mezuzah containing this verse on their doorposts, but they have missed the *spirit*

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<sup>3</sup> He speaks of it as being “characteristic of Deuteronomy’s style, and highlights the good life made possible in the promised land by means of covenant faithfulness and obedience. The universal human desire for peace and prosperity is hereby made relational by linking it to YHWH’s covenant.” Bill T. Arnold, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, Chapters 1–11, ed. E. J. Young et al., *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2022), 286.

of the verse - that God must be the foundation and focus of all that we do inside and outside the home. If God is the focus of our love and devotion, then God's very nature will impact the way we think, feel, and act.

Now, let's think about God as the model of love. If God was a radical unity (as in Islam) then prior to creation, the only Person God could have loved would have been Himself - a selfish love; a self-focused love. But since God is one God in three Persons, each Person's love is outgoing and unselfish. The Father loves the Son and Spirit. The Son loves the Father and Spirit. The Spirit loves the Father and Son. Their love is always thinking of the other Persons and committed to the other Persons of the Trinity. As Vern Poythress worded it, "God is the original pattern or archetype for love."<sup>4</sup> Before there was a universe, there was love. Before there were stars, there was communion and fellowship. Before there were children, there was a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit delighting in each other and totally satisfied in their inter-Trinitarian relationship.

And you might wonder, "Now, wait a minute! Where do you see the Trinity in this verse?" Well, it is strongly implied. Let me explain. When you see the word "LORD" in all capital letters in the New King James, it is God's covenant name, Yehowah. It is in the singular. The word for "God," *Elohim*, is in the *plural*. Normally *Elohim* is translated as "gods," but it cannot be translated as "gods" here because of the grammar. It is a plural construct in the Hebrew because there is plurality in God. But when that plural word "Elohim" is applied to God, it is always modified by either a singular article "the" or the singular "Yehowah." That's not bad grammar; it's just the reality of who God is. This verse indicates that there is a plurality in God, yet He is still only one God or one Yehowah. And other Scriptures explain this plurality as being three Persons within the one Godhead. Though God is three Persons, He is not three gods, but one God. There is plurality and unity in the one true God.

And this is what Van Til, Rushdoony, and others speak of as being the foundation for the concept of the equal ultimacy of the One and the Many. And I don't usually get into philosophy too much in my sermons, but let me give a bare-bones explanation of how foundational this is to all philosophy. Our Triune God is the only basis for maintaining an equal ultimacy in both unity and diversity. And it doesn't just impact what unselfish love looks like. Cornelius Van Til also applies this concept to metaphysics and epistemology. R. J. Rushdoony applied it in many areas other of life. He points out that philosophers have struggled with which is more ultimate - unity or particularity, and because they reject God and His Word, they just can't come to a balance in philosophy, ethics, or politics. Rushdoony said this: "Every society is an attempted answer to the problem of the one and the many."<sup>5</sup> "Dialectical philosophy has sought to retain both social order and the particular individual, both the unity and particularity of being."<sup>6</sup> But inevitably the systems they come

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<sup>4</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *Knowing and the Trinity: How Perspectives in Human Knowledge Imitate the Trinity*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Press, 2018), p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, "Van Til and the One and Many Problem" in E. R. Geehan, ed., *Jerusalem and Athens* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 341.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

up with are “torn between growing totalitarianism and growing anarchy.”<sup>7</sup> “Each subsequent attempt to build a supposedly new dialectical culture fails, as have countless previous attempts...”<sup>8</sup> “Men have avoided the answer to the problem of the one and the many because they reject the God who is the answer.”<sup>9</sup>

Now, I know that may seem like highbrow philosophy to some of you, but I at least wanted to introduce you to a super-brief hint of where you could go with this verse. Entire books have been written about how a failure to start with the Trinity and His revelation brings ruin to mankind. In societies that are polytheistic, you don’t have that Biblical balance, so it is easy for atomism to happen. In societies like Islamic states that focus on the one, centralism and control happens. But because of time limits, and because I am having mercy on you, that is all I can say on the philosophical implications of verse 4. But the ramifications of this verse go way beyond anything that I am even hinting at here. Just read the books on your outline and you will see.

But back to the main theme of love and devotion, your children know what you worship. They can see it in your calendar. They can see it in your spending. They can see it in how easily family worship is neglected. They notice all the things that displace God in your life. And don’t think that it doesn’t impact them. It does. Too often, children see parents putting all kinds of things ahead of God. It may be a job, a hobby, or anything else that is all-consuming and that distracts them from God. If anything takes the place of God, it is automatically an idol. Well, this sends wrong signals to our children who can recognize hypocrisy. Children need to know that nothing comes before our relationship with God. Ironically, when they see that our laser focus is on loving God with everything that is in us, it gives them security. After all, our love for our children flows from and imitates our love for God. The one love affects the other.

### B. The comprehensive nature of right loving (v. 5)

But verse 5 goes on to describe the comprehensive nature of right loving: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” Just as each Person of the Trinity loves the other Persons within the Godhead with a total love, He calls us to imitate Him by loving God with the *totality of our being* (heart, soul, and strength) and to love God totally *in each part* of our being (*all your heart...all your soul...all your strength*). God’s earlier *covenant* that He made with them should have inspired this kind of love. After all, God loved them with this kind of total love. His earlier *promises* to them should have inspired this kind of love. The glory of God that we looked at last week should have inspired this kind of love. His faithfulness to their fore-fathers should inspired this kind of love. Our love for God should to some degree reflect God’s love for us.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>8</sup> This is actually a quote from Martin Selbrede’s analysis, from whom I got the quotes from Rushdoony. <https://chalcedon.edu/resources/articles/dialectical-culture>

<sup>9</sup> Geehan, ed., Jerusalem and Athens, p. 347.

And by the way, Biblical love is not sentiment only. It is covenant loyalty expressed in obedience and devotion. I think that a marriage covenant is the best illustration that I could give - especially when God likens His love to the church to a marriage. Can you imagine wedding vows going something like this: “Nancy, I vow to love you with 40% of my being and I vow to love you on Sundays and sometimes on Wednesdays and Thursdays.” No! God calls husbands and wives to imitate God’s covenant love by promising total loyalty and devotion to each other. There is a sense in which the first commandment is a call to *that* kind of a marriage covenant with God. And that may be why verses 6-9 have a special focus on the home. By making God’s Words central to the home, we are making God *Himself* central to the home.

#### IV. Right learning - training the next generation (vv. 6-9)

So we have looked at right living, right loving, and we look next at right learning.

##### A. Starts with the Word internalized by the parents (v. 6)

Verse 6 starts with the Word of God being internalized by the parents. “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.” We can hardly expect our children to be transformed by God’s Word if we parents are not being transformed by God’s Word from the inside out. Or another way of saying it is that you cannot catechize others with what you do not cherish yourself. Think of a printing press. It can’t produce anything without internalizing the ink. But when the printing press has sufficiently been inked, it can produce many copies of itself to others. But it starts with the Word being internalized by the parents. A Bible that sits unopened on a shelf will never capture the imagination of the next generation. It won’t. It will seem irrelevant. So don’t be surprised when the second or third generation drift from Christianity.

##### B. Continues as the parents apply the Word to all of life (v. 7)

Next, it continues as the parents *apply* the Word to all of life. They don’t just read it, they teach it and then apply it by living it out. Verse 7 says, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” This is a daily liturgy where God’s Word never leaves us - which implies memorization of Scripture and meditation on Scripture. But it implies much more. He calls us to have God’s Word impacting our lives when we sit, walk, lie down, and rise up. In other words, this is not calling for a Sunday-go-to-meetin’-Christianity. It is calling for a God-saturated and Scripture-saturated Christianity seven days a week.

And the word “diligently” in the Hebrew is an interesting word. It has the idea of penetration from the outside to the inside. In other words, it is a kind of teaching that is not satisfied with outward conformity in our children. You can *make* your children pray, read the Bible, and go along with the externals of the faith, but that will only produce Pharisees if their heart is not in it. This is talking about getting to the heart of the children. Parents who internalize the Word should desire that the Word also be internalized in the children -

going all the way to the heart. You can't force that, but in a moment I will explain how you can woo children to that and make them hunger for that. That should be the goal.

Nor is this passage talking about giving the children a lecture after they have messed up. Sure, there will be lectures. But this is making sure that we are so Scripture-saturated that it is the most natural thing in the world to have Scripture oozing out of our pores. The Scriptures should characterize everything we do, including "when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." At a minimum, this implies that you know how the Bible applies to everything you do. Most Christians nowadays don't know how the Bible applies to all of life because they are not familiar with the blueprints of Deuteronomy. Does God's Word have anything to say about how we should lie down on our beds, sleep, and dream? Yes it says a lot about those things - even our dreamlife. We *are* responsible for our dreams. And the discipline of meditation can transform our dream life. Does it have anything to say about how we should eat? Obviously yes. Does it deal with exercise, physical intimacy, homeschooling, hygiene, relaxation, entertainment, cleaning our teeth, grooming our beards, disciplining our children, feeding our cattle, and countless other things that consume our schedules? Absolutely yes. But the only way that you can pass on your knowledge of all those things is if you homeschool your children. If you send your children off to government school, you won't have the time to fulfill the admonition in this verse. And Deuteronomy will have a lot to say about homeschooling, but here it is obvious that the kids need to be with the parent throughout the day for the Bible to be able to be applied throughout the day to everything they do. I think this verse is a great argument for homeschooling.

But it's not just *any* kind of homeschooling. We should not settle for secular education that seems OK because it has had the worst elements of secularism have been pruned out of it and has some Christian ideas mixed in. That's sort of like Christians being excited with the president wanting the ten commandments to be posted on government school walls. No, these verses are calling for far more than that. It is calling for an education where the Word *saturates* everything we do 24-7.

Psalms 139:13 wants us to treat each child as a unique child with their own gifts, weaknesses, and strengths, and to tailor our education to that child's needs. You can only tailor the education to each child's needs via homeschooling. Christian education is not like a factory that pumps out the same product. No, it is sensitive to the calling and giftings God has given to each child.

And it's not about harsh imposition of behavior modification on our children either. It's wooing them to the same love and excitement for the Bible that we have. Proverbs 22:6 has a very interesting word in it along these lines. It says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The Hebrew word for "train up" is a very interesting word. One dictionary points out that it was originally used for rubbing the gums of a newborn baby with the juice of dates to get the infant to suckle. It's instilling a desire and hunger for suckling. But the idea is a kind of training that makes the child long for more. That's hard work. It takes creativity to get children to suckle on God's Word (so to speak) and to get them to want more and more *on their own initiative*. Well, that will happen when they long to have the relationship with God that they see in their parents.

### C. Matures with the Word being visibly lived out by the parents (v. 8)

So right learning starts with parents internalizing the Word, it continues as they try to apply the Word to all of life. Third, it matures as the Word is more and more consistently lived out by the parents in a visible way. In other words, verse 8 is talking about *modeling* the Scriptures in our walk. It says, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” What does that mean? The Pharisees completely missed the spirit of the verse when they literally took a handful of Bible verses and put them into a little container that they tied to their hands and into another container called a Phylactery that they tied to their foreheads. And they thought, “Great. We have fulfilled God’s command because we have a handful of verses tied there.” But Jesus pointed out that they had completely missed the point of this command. The point of having the *entirety* (not just a few verses, but the *entirety*) of God’s Word bound to our hand was a symbolic way of making sure that all the dominion done with our hands is done consistently with the Scripture. The point of having the entirety of God’s Word bound to our foreheads between our eyes was to make sure that all of our thinking and visual analysis was being done consistently with God’s Word.

And you might think, “Pastor, that is so theoretical. I have no idea how to put that into practice.” And my website, Biblical Blueprints, can help you put it into practice. But let me give you totally non-academic examples right now. Your child has just spilled his milk for the fourth time by fooling around and being careless. The spilled milk can become a lesson on Biblical stewardship, not an opportunity to get exasperated with your child. Most of you know at least a few Scriptures on what it means to be a Biblical steward, and that mess can be a gentle training example. The sibling argument can become a lesson on Biblical peacemaking, and what justice, mercy, and kindness look like, - not simply a lecture without directing the children to Christ’s grace. Sickness that has invaded the house can be an opportunity to teach on God’s loving sovereignty, not an opportunity to complain. The more we respond to the things God sovereignly brings into our lives from a Biblical perspective, the less we will be acting like the Pharisees, who tended to respond to those things with man-made wisdom and traditions rather than the Word of God. Children can forgive imperfect theology (especially when parents are teachable and are willing to repent to their children - and Kathy and I had to repent to our children a number of times). But they have a harder time forgiving hypocrisy.

### D. Extends as the Word transforms culture (v. 9)

And finally, in verse 9, we see that right learning extends so far that it eventually transforms culture. “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

#### 1. The home (v. 9a)

It starts with the home because the home is the seedbed of culture. As goes the home, so goes the culture. To write them on the doorposts is a symbolic way of saying that the law is identified with the home and becomes a permanent part of the home’s culture. You may not

have thought of your home as producing a culture, but it does - either a good culture or defective one.

## 2. Public life (v. 9b)

But the same law must be written on the gates of every city. God's claims extend from family to civic identity. Mark Futato writes, "the point of this verse is that 'the word of God is to govern your domestic affairs and your corporate affairs.'"<sup>10</sup> And I say "Amen!" It's the Scripture that should apply to corporate affairs, not natural law. John Currid's commentary gives a bit more details on this, saying,

The words of the covenant are also to be written on the doorposts of Israelite homes and on their gateposts. The latter are not the gates of individual houses but the reference is rather to the gates of the towns and cities. This underscores the covenantal aspect of the command. The point of the statute is to show that no matter where one travels—to home or away from home—the Torah is central to one's life.<sup>11</sup>

And when the Bible is central to one's life, it has enormous positive implications for culture. Numerous books have been written showing why the Christian West has produced the best in technology, science, art, liberty, capitalism, and many other areas of life that have been admired by the world. Those things mainly flowed from countries that took the Bible seriously in their education and in their dominion. Diana Kleyn and Joel Beeke said,

The emphasis on education also led to more discoveries in science. As people studied more, they began to explore the world outside of their towns and villages. They became interested in the worlds beyond the oceans, and they wanted to learn more about astronomy and biology. As the Reformers broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, there was more freedom for this exploration to continue. Technological advances and new scientific discoveries were made, showing that the Reformation in some way helped the rise of science as it is known today.<sup>12</sup>

The point is that the West did not rise by accident. It rose because men believed that the Bible governed both kitchens *and* parliaments. And civilizations do not collapse first and foremost because of war or economic policy. They collapse first and foremost because fathers stopped opening this Book and stopped applying it to all of life. That may seem like an exaggeration, but in my notes here I have a long list of scholarly books that demonstrate

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Futato, *Daily Dose of Hebrew with Mark Futato: Transcripts* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2021), Dt 6:9.

<sup>11</sup> John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Deuteronomy, EP Study Commentary* (Darlington, England; Webster, New York: Evangelical Press, 2006), 166.

<sup>12</sup> Diana Kleyn and Joel R. Beeke, *Reformation Heroes: A Simple, Illustrated Overview of People Who Assisted in the Great Work of the Reformation*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 194.

rather cogently that Protestantism, and especially Calvinism, provided the kind of worldview and passion for dominion that enabled men to hugely advance liberty, science, art, technology, and some of the better ideas in even civics and economics.<sup>13</sup> Just as Israel under Joshua had a God-given faith to not only conquer the land, but to transform it into a God-glorifying country, these Christians were passionate about seeing all of life being brought under the feet of King Jesus.

I also highly recommend watching the free online video that is titled, “Truth Rising,”<sup>14</sup> that has third world scholars telling the West that they are astonished that we are giving up the very Bible and worldview that made the West great. They can see it from the outside, but we in the West tend to be blind to it. We are living on borrowed capital, and it is running out! It’s a very moving documentary on how formerly Christian nations are moving away

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<sup>13</sup> Abraham Kuyper’s *Lectures on Calvinism* shows how Calvinism (with its comprehensive worldview) has helped to shape politics, science, and art in the past, and that we are losing those foundations and as a result may very soon lose the beautiful fruits of the Christian West. Kuyper, Abraham. *Lectures on Calvinism*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, repr. ed., originally delivered 1898. Herman Bavinck wrote *Christianity and Science*, a book that ties a Biblical worldview tightly together with scholarship and science. Bavinck, Herman. *Christianity and Science*. Edited by N. Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and Cory C. Brock. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023. Francis Schaeffer’s book, *How Should We Then Live: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* shows the same thing with music, art, and other areas of public life. Schaeffer, Francis A. *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway. Though Max Weber’s book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* has had some legitimate pushback, he gives a great deal of evidence that when Protestants were Bible centered, they also had a profound influence in promoting liberty and economic freedom. Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons (standard English entry point; many editions). Peter Harrison wrote, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*. He argues that the way Protestants read the Bible and applied it to all of life hugely shaped modern science. Harrison, Peter. *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (late 1990s/early 2000s editions). Arthur Herman wrote *How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe’s Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It*. That book shows how the Reformation in Scotland rocketed literacy, a thirst for understanding God’s world, and how its desire for Biblical dominion brought about all kinds of inventions. Herman, Arthur. *How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe’s Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It*. New York: Crown Publishing Group / Three Rivers Press (popular-history editions; early 2000s). Rodney Stark wrote *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*. Stark, Rodney. *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*. New York: Random House, 2005; paperback ed. New York: Random House, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXc5IhgSZkg&t=10s>

from greatness because they have embraced Wokism, Transgenderism, Marxism, and have opened their borders to mass immigration of Hindus, Muslims, and other pagans. Those things cannot continue to happen without Western Civilization being destroyed in the process. And yes, we will see later in this book that God is *very* interested in border control. He is very interested in making sure that Amalekites and Ammonites didn't make it into the land without conversion. There must be a shared ideology for a nation to be sustained.

And let me use one illustration. Post-Reformation Scotland took the training of their children very seriously. As a result, literacy rates soared. But so did involvement in culture. Private piety spilled over into public transformation as God's people took the internalized Scriptures into everything that they did. Several scholars have documented the profound influence that post-Reformation Scotland had on the world. Just think of the title of one of those books. It is titled, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It*. Though it was a tiny country, it had the most consistently lived out Biblical worldview of any Western Christian country, and thus Scotland's influence was far more profound than any other Western Christian country. In contrast, there is a reason why the modern church in America has had so little Biblical impact upon society. I believe it is because the Bible has had so little impact upon the Christians themselves. And perhaps more importantly, because Christians have been so impacted by secular thinking in their education - including Christian schools and homeschooling.

So I started by having you imagine that you were standing on the East side of the Jordan, listening to these words from Moses, and anxious to take dominion for Jehovah under Joshua. Well, Jesus is pictured in the New Testament as a new Joshua, calling not just for the transformation of Canaan, but for the transformation of the entire world. His commission to the church says,

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Discipling all nations (so that as nations they observe His Word) may seem like an impossible task. You may feel insignificant, just like Scotland did. You may realize that the world is an almost impossible task to change, just like Scotland did. But if you take your cues from Scotland, you will say, “The duty is ours; the results are in God's hands.” And you will start with your family and work out from there - just like Scotland did, and just like this passage admonished Israel to do. It all starts with the home. Most of you have a wide-open opportunity to influence your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren with the truths of God's Word. And yes, it takes a cathedral-building-longterm-vision to start that process. But, imagine Christ's smile and His “Well done, you good and faithful servant” when you get to heaven. You may not feel like you have accomplished much, but He will tell you, “You laid some of the foundation stones for this magnificent cathedral of Biblical civilization.”

And if you have blown it in the past, put that under the blood of Christ, and reject any curses and regrets that Satan whispers in your ears. He wants you to give up. Don't listen to Satan's accusations. On a sermon like this that deals with the ideal, it is very easy to get discouraged for not measuring up - but none of us measure up. We just keep pressing forward. When you have fallen down, you get up, dust yourself off, and get back in the fight. Regrets just paralyze. And that's why Moses spent so much time in the first five chapters grounding us in the Gospel. The Gospel energizes us to keep God's law, and without the Gospel, our dominion will be hamstrung. Deuteronomy 6 is not about your control of life. You can't control life. Far from it. 1. It is about faithfulness in laying a foundation within your family for a multi-generational legacy. 2. It is about faithfulness in loving God and loving your neighbor - knowing that God is the only one who can change this world anyway. 3. It is about putting God first in your life *right now*.

May that be true of each of us. Amen. Let's pray.