



Deut. 6:20-25

What Will You Tell Them When They Ask?

20 " When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?'

21 "then you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand;

22 'and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household.

23 'Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers.

24 'And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day.

25 'Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.'

“In a new study conducted by Kelton research in conjunction with the upcoming release of the animated feature film, *The Ten Commandments*, 80 percent of respondents knew "two all beef patties" were among the ingredients of the Big Mac but only six out of ten could identify "Thou shalt not kill" as one of the Ten Commandments.

Also, while 43 per cent of respondents – including those who regularly attend worship – could recall Bobby and Peter, two of the least-recalled names from the Brady Bunch, they were less familiar with two of the least recalled commandments – "Remember the Sabbath" (34 percent) and "Do not make any false idols" (29 percent)."

Barna Reports: “Almost everyone in the U.S. believes that truth exists. However, a large majority of both adults and teenagers, Christian and non-Christian, contends that there is no absolute moral truth. More than two out of three adults and more than four out of five teenagers argue that truth is always relative to the individual and the circumstances. While most of these people describe themselves as followers of Christ and say that the Bible is accurate in all of its teachings, they nevertheless believe that truth is based on feelings, experience or emotion.”

If we consider those findings, it will quickly become evident one of the reasons that are culture is in such a moral tailspin is that there is terrible lack of biblical knowledge amongst both the culture in general and also the Christian community. We simply do not know what the Word of God teaches. Now this is not because there aren't enough bibles in the United States, on average there are 3.9 Bibles for every household. What is lacking is instruction in what those bibles teach. We have gone several generations now without the majority of parents sitting down and teaching their children what the word of God teaches. I myself was born at the end of the 60s and grew up in the 1970s and I never received any biblical instruction from my parents. Neither did the majority of my friends. But I should add, neither did their parents or my parents. So when we asked them the truth questions, the big questions,

they didn't have answers, only personal opinions. So many of the kids I grew up with didn't even get that, they were told to form their own opinions about God and Good and Evil.

Given that it should surprise us that the Bible has become simply a book that we hold in superstitious reverence, without knowing what it teaches, and as a result we as a nation we have come to believe that truth is not something we find in its pages, but in our own subjective feelings, experience, and emotion. We have become like the people of Israel in the time of the judges: ***“everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”*** (Judge 17:6)

But that relativism that prevailed in the time of the Judges and in our own time, was a direct result of the failure of parents to follow the Lord's instructions given here and elsewhere to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. To teach his word to the children he has given us.

Now in this chapter many expositors see an example of what has sometimes been called a lost tool of religious instruction. Catechism with its question and answer format. Verses 21-25 can be read as catechetical answer to the question posed in verse 20. “What is the meaning...”

Now those questions and teaching opportunities that question presupposes, would only arise if the parents themselves are observing the laws. For instance, if you observe the Sabbath, your children will have questions about why and what it means. If you *don't* they aren't going to ask questions. They will simply assume that non-observance of the law of God is the norm.

Also please notice the answer that is given here is a rational and based on the redemptive work of the Lord, not family tradition or personal practice. Far too often when kids ask “why do we do this” we jog back to “Because MOMMY says so!” But as adults you know that kind of answer would never satisfy you. Can you imagine going into your boss or your commanders office and saying “Sir, why is it our practice to do so and so? I'm not understanding why we do this.” And hearing *Because Bossy says so.*

Now your kids may grit their teeth and obey for the time that you force them to. But honestly, how likely are your children to continue practices they don't understand?

Children will also not understand what the point is of doing something you don't consider important enough to do. That is why dropping them off at Sunday School, driving home and going to bed is useless. Also, if you tell them not to swear and do it yourself, they will see it as an arbitrary restriction or something only associated with childhood. *They will assume that coming of age involves swearing.*

Teaching invariably means modeling the truth. Our children learn by example. These days we see pastor after pastor taking exception to keeping the Lord's Day, having spoken with them I find that invariably they were not raised observing it, nor did they ever see it modeled in their church. When therefore, they find it in the Confession, they see it as unnecessary to the Christian life, and certainly not the *normal* practice.

Notice though that the answer to these catechetical instructions is *not* ***“because the Lord said so, end of argument!”*** when will that answer satisfy the natural man's rebellious heart? As Christopher Wright points out ***“If this is all that is given of explanation, the son might very well give Pharaoh's response, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice?”*** (Exodus 5:2)

Rather the classic format is to explain first the facts of our redemption, *we obey the Lord because this is who He is this is How He has delivered us, and this is why we love Him*. If we do not know Him as redeemer, we won't have any desire to keep his commandments. That is why parents who fail to urge their children to close with Christ by faith also fail to make them into men and women who love his laws as the Psalmist did.

We see this emphasis placed on the ordinances of the ceremonial law throughout the OT. So many people today don't understand all of the feasts and observances because they don't see them as signs pointing to the Lord's saving work, both in time past and in time to come. They were in themselves signs and symbols designed to show the facts of redemption to our children:

Exodus 13:13 "But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

14 "So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Even a pile of stones:

Joshua 4:21 Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?'

22 "then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land';

23 "for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over,

24 "that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

Also, and I cannot emphasize this enough, there must not only be the abstract and somewhat distant instruction that comes with the Lord has Done Thus and So. There must also be the personal relation not just of the facts of redemption but of the facts of your personal redemption. Spurgeon put it this way.

"And cannot we tell our children what God has done for us — how he brought us out of our spiritual captivity, and how in his almighty love, he has brought us into his Church and will surely bring us into the glory above? May God grant us grace to speak about these things without diffidence, With great confidence to tell our children of what he has done." - Spurgeon

Finally a note about verse 25, Verse 25 is NOT speaking of works righteousness or salvation by keeping the law, rather the point being made is that obedience to the law is the right response to the saving work of God.

Exodus 20:5 "to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

John 14:15 " If you love Me, keep My commandments.

Clearly while the law is righteous we know that no man can be justified by the keeping of it. In fact one of the critical values of instructing your children in the law will cause them to see their own unrighteousness and cause them to flee to Christ who is *The Lord Our Righteousness*.

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The application of all of this is simple:

“We deeply want a revival of domestic religion. The Christian family was the bulwark of godliness in the days of the Puritans; but in these evil times hundreds of families of so-called Christians have no family worship, no restraint upon growing sons, and no wholesome instruction or discipline. How can we hope to see the kingdom of our Lord advance when His own disciples do not teach His gospel to their own children?”

Oh, Christian men and women, be thorough in what you do and know and teach! Let your families be trained in the fear of God, and be yourselves “holiness unto the Lord;” so shall you stand like a rock amid the surging waves of error and ungodliness which rage around us.” – C.H. Spurgeon

If we do not, like the churches and families before us, we will succumb to liberalism and then relativism.

The church that neglects catechetical instruction has itself to blame for its waning strength. – William Hendriksen

Will that be hard? Yes. Will it cut into our “personal time” yes. But are the eternal souls of your children not worth it a little trouble in this present evil age? let our testimony therefore take for its words the saying of bible translator William Tyndale, “Banish me to the poorest corner of the world if you please, but let me teach the little children and preach the gospel” - **Tyndale**