

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church  
Christian Education Sunday  
February 4, 2018  
Sermon by Pastor Justin Gran  
***Leave a lasting impression***

—Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 20-23

Think about some of the skills you have today. You can speak. You learned that first at home. All of you look pretty well dressed today; chances are most of you dressed yourselves. You learned that at home. Our preschool, like many others, has some requirements for new students, among the most notable is that a child must be potty-trained (they don't teach that at preschool, you have to learn that one at home). You can interact on many different levels with other people. That learning began at home shortly after birth. You learned how to recognize emotions—when to laugh, when to be concerned, when to be sympathetic.

What you learned at home as a child has no doubt left a lasting impression on you today. There are many different means and levels of education, but the most basic, most foundational learning happens as parents teach their children. The same can be said specifically of Christian education. There are many different facets and levels of Christian education at our church and in our church body—Sunday School, VBS, Lutheran day school, Teen Bibles study, Adult Bible studies, Lutheran colleges, a college of ministry, a seminary... All of these are gems, but the most basic, the most foundational Christian education happens when Christian parents teach their children. This is by God's design and command.

In Deuteronomy 6, the Lord told Moses to teach Israel all that the Lord had commanded ***“so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live.”*** And then he these commands and decrees, ***“are to be upon your heart. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”***

Moses' plea that one generation leave a lasting impression on the next was so important because that's all it took. One generation. It would only take one generation to forget what the Lord had done and what the Lord had said. It would only take one generation to become lax or complacent before the next generation would become completely ignorant of the Word of God. That's all.

American linguists have noticed an interesting phenomenon among immigrant families over the span of just three generations. The first generation to come to the States brings their native language (that's called the heritage language). The second generation is born in the US and in the early years of life they learn their heritage language. They go to school and even though learn English, at home they speak that heritage language and they will likely have it for life because it's been impressed upon them from a young age. But then they have children, a third generation. For many different reasons that third generation doesn't learn that heritage language. They may hear it occasionally as their parents talk to their grandparents, but they're not immersed in it day in and day out at home. It was not impressed upon them during such a critical developmental time. And like that, the heritage language is lost. It just took one generation. That's all.

I know it's not the same thing, but do you see what could happen with the heritage of God's Word? Just one generation. That's all. Moses' words in Deuteronomy have application for parents and families, but first he speaks to the individual believer. The Word of the Lord first ***“is to be on your heart”*** so that you do not lose the heritage of God's word passed down to you. It is to be impressed upon your heart and mind, whether sitting at home or on the road. Remember what you once learned, and relearn it, and continue to learn more. Is that how you would describe your relationship with God and his word? Have you learned more since your confirmation, or have you forgotten basic truths?

If you are a parent and you have children still under your roof, what impression are you giving when it comes to the Word of God? Are you impressing upon them the vital, lifelong importance it has, or do you ever slightly give the impression that something else may be a little more important? Is God's will and God's grace spoken about openly and fluently in family discussions at home or when you're driving on the road? Or with busy lives and schedules, do you confine the Word of God to just one small, one-hour block of the schedule? Do you hold your

child to the same high standards you were held to when learning the catechism, or do you shrug your shoulders when they say, “Why do I have to learn this?”

We’re not just talking about just passing down an important heritage of culture or family tradition. We’re talking about the eternal welfare of souls—our own souls and those of the next generation. The Word, the message of Jesus Christ, is like food and water for the soul—without it we die. How often have we dehydrated ourselves? How often have we allowed our children to go malnourished? One generation. That’s all it takes.

But, there is one act of deliverance that gives hope and eternal life to all who believe. As Moses recounted all the laws and commands of the Lord and pointed out how Israel failed to keep these in the desert, he always seemed to circle back to one act of deliverance that demonstrated God’s grace for generations to come. He rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. This act of deliverance was at the heart of all that the Lord instructed parents to teach their children. Moses said, ***“In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?” tell him: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.”*** Can you picture it? Generations later, a little Israelite boy is sitting at home at the Passover meal, or on the road to the Tabernacle to bring a sacrifice of blood, and like most little boys he’s eager to learn. He asks, “What is this all about?” The parents were to respond, “It’s all about the Lord who saved us.”

Isn’t that at the heart and core of Christian education? It’s all about the Lord, Jesus Christ, and what he’s done to save us. Impress this truth upon your own heart first. Jesus has saved you. That is the most basic and most fundamental truth you have ever been taught as a Christian. Every other truth you learn in Scripture must go right back to that basic truth—Jesus Christ is your Savior from sin. Daily in our own lives, we need to go back to the basics. When you realize just how short we have fallen in keeping God’s word and commands go back to the basics: Jesus lived a perfect life, for you. After you realize that you haven’t perfectly fulfilled your God-given role, go back to the basics and remember the simplest and most profound truth you ever learned: Jesus died for you. Jesus lives for you. Jesus washed your sin away.

Because this truth of Jesus has been taught to you, you have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. How will the next generation have those same blessings unless they too learn about Jesus? And who will teach them? I could put a plug in to encourage young men and women to consider the teaching ministry, or for young men to train to be pastors. But those future pastors and teachers wouldn’t have anyone to instruct or shepherd unless Christian parents continue impress Christian truths upon their children from the start. That’s why on Christian education Sunday I want to encourage you parents to consider the vital role that you have in telling the next generation. The Lord is talking to you when he says, ***“Impress [these words] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”***

How will you leave an impression that, God willing, will last to eternity? I think that happens in different ways for different families, but one thing is a must—Jesus and his Word have to be at the heart and core of the Christian home. This happens in planned and intentional ways. Make time in God’s house a weekly priority. When sitting at home, find time in the morning or night to read a Meditations. If you’re like most modern families on the road a lot, there’s even an app for that (the WLES app has daily devotions you can listen to). Driving home from Church, think of one truth you want to impress upon your hear this week.

There are also not so planned ways to impress Christian truths upon children. If you have to discipline your small child, there’s a place to say that’s wrong and that’s dangerous, but there’s also a place to say, “I forgive you, and most of all, Jesus forgives you.” When you’re driving along the road and your older kid sees a bumper sticker that expresses one of today’s many beliefs, as him what he thinks. Talk about it in light of God’s Word.

I don’t know what opportunities will arise for you and your family this week to impress the truth of Jesus Christ upon the hearts of your children, but I’m sure the opportunities will arise. When they do, remember what it’s really all about. It’s not about hammering away rule after rule; that would be exasperating. It’s not even about you being the perfect, always most well put together parent; that would be impossible. But it’s all about Jesus and what he’s done to save you. That’s at the heart and core of Christian education. If you wish to impress that truth upon your child’s heart, impress it first upon your own heart. Just think of the impression it leaves when your child sees you humbly confess your sins and trust in Jesus for forgiveness. Just think the impression it leaves when you admit how

much you yourself need Jesus and his love in your life. Impress these think upon your heart, on your children, and on whomever God has put in your path. It's about Jesus who saved us. That's what it's all about.

Amen.