

WD May 9, 2022

“Our First Impression of Jesus”

We all know that first impressions can either make us or break us. Most experts believe that a job interview is usually decided within thirty seconds of meeting one another. Just getting an interview in the first place is challenge enough but one only has a moment to win over a potential boss. We live in a world of first impressions whether they are fair or unfair. The real world makes judgement calls. In fact, a local pastor made mention of his son who lives in Washington. He is a cruise ship captain who went to a boat dealer to buy his own boat. He dressed like he was going to the beach, in flip-flops, shorts and tank top. The dealer who was used to high end clientele hardly gave him the time of day. The pastor laughed and said that the boat salesman probably lost out on an eighty-thousand-dollar sale. Because of the way he was ignored his son walked out within minutes of arriving going somewhere else to buy his boat.

The Lord realizes how important first impressions are as well. So, for our reading today let us consider Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ⁴Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷Impress 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. ⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

In the spirit of Mother’s Day yesterday and Father’s Day coming next month I can’t imagine any greater first impression than the one parents make upon their kids. We parents are the first impression of who Jesus is. We see how much the Lord wants to prioritize the example we “impress” upon our children. And for good reason. Our children learn from the earliest days what sacrificial love looks like. They literally experience it every day as we change their diapers, hold them, feed them, love them unconditionally when they are ‘bad’, and care for them 24/7/365. Our children are always watching. They watch what we prioritize and know what we truly value by what we spend our time doing and our money buying.

So, when Deuteronomy 6 and 11 mention talking about the Commandments sitting at home, on the road, lying down, and getting up and then tying them as symbols on our heads and hands it is referring to integration. The Lord calls the Israelites to integrate God’s Word into every corner of their lives; day, night, dinner time and wherever one goes. The key word is ‘impress’, or ‘teach’ them. This word implies a deliberate and intentional effort to teach the Word of God to our children.

We know that in today’s world forces are at work to teach our children. They are deliberate and intentional in their goals and efforts. The subject of sex is a good example. Stories are breaking out all over the news these days about school districts, and teachers sharing books that teach very unchristian views on this subject. Public schools are strangely eager to sexualize our children younger and younger.

My suggestion on this is simple. Be their first impression. Be deliberate and intentional on this very important and sensitive subject. I invite you to consider the advice of Gary Thomas, author of *Sacred Parenting* and *Sacred Marriage*. Tell your kids as toddlers and preschoolers about sexuality. Remind them that God created them male and female and even commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and then called it very good. Teach them how boys and girls are different and what that means. Teach them that sex is sacred and meant to remain within limits of marriage. Being the first impression could help children maintain appropriate boundaries as they grow older as well. Not only so but later they may better avoid the dangers of pornography and shame and guilt that are often associated with sex. Sex is not shameful when it is done in the context of God’s design. Someone is going to leave an impression upon our kids. Better you than someone else.

We know how Jesus feels about our kids. Luke 18:15-17 Jesus says, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” We also hear Jesus say in Matthew 18:6 “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” Jesus is serious about our children. If you think that you love your children Jesus loves them infinitely more. His cross and resurrection was as much for them as it was for us.

We also learn from Jesus how significant an impression is. He tells His disciples in John 14:9 that if we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father. Jesus and the Father are one. To see one is to see the other. Jesus was the perfect image of the Heavenly Father.

We are not going to be perfect parents. God will forgive our mistakes and our moments of impatience. But the reality remains. Ideally, when our children see us, they see Jesus; at least a good example of what Jesus is like. Not just sacrificial and loving but also disciplined. We can't expect our children to be disciplined if we ourselves are not. If our butts are in church each week, then they will understand the importance of going. If our character holds high standards of integrity, gentleness and respect they will learn this too. A godly example doesn't guarantee they will follow our example any more than Adam, who even under perfect conditions still sinned. Yet, if we are modeling an example that glorifies Jesus, our children will at least see that within us something very special is at work. They will have a much better chance of genuinely knowing Jesus. And that is the main purpose of being a mom or dad. May God bless the impression we make upon our children.

Pastor Matthew Woods
John 3:30