

# Spiritually Leading a Child

By Douglas Wood

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read Deuteronomy 6:1. Prepare to share one commandment, one statute, and one rule all people are subject to. (For example, speed limits are a type of statute from the state that drivers must obey in order to keep their license).

### Assignment Two

Read Deuteronomy 6:5. Prepare to share your thoughts on what it means to love God with all your (1) heart, (2) soul, and (3) might. Make this a practical list that will be applicable in the lives of others in your group.

### Assignment Three

Read Deuteronomy 6:7. The passage provides a clear time, place and setting for parents to teach children the things of the Lord. Prepare to share a short description of how a person might follow these instructions with their children. (For example, intentional conversations while driving children to school might be an example of “when you walk by the way.”)

## Scripture to Memorize

*Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.* Psalm 127:3

## Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand some basic roles a parent has in spiritually rearing a child according to scriptural principles.

**Douglas Wood** is associate professor of Christian Education and Worship at Southwestern Seminary’s Havard School of Theological Studies in Houston, Texas. For over seventeen years he has taught at Christian colleges and seminaries. He served as student minister at some of the largest Southern Baptist churches, including First Baptist Church of Dallas, Champion Forest Baptist of Houston, and First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City. He leads conferences, writes, and is a Christian comedian/speaker, presenting at events across the country. His website is [www.dougwood.com](http://www.dougwood.com). The father of four, he is a proud grandfather to two beautiful girls and a grandson.

## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

Ethan is a new Christ follower. He was not reared in a Christian home, but now he wants to know how he can grow in his faith and be the spiritual leader in his own home. He sees others at church who seem to know the Bible and have a wonderful walk with Christ, and he wants that. Do you know a book or video he can get that would instruct him? a seminar or class he could take that would help? Or does the Bible itself present clear ways to spiritually lead at home?

Read Deuteronomy 6:1–7 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 1. commandment.** Given by God Himself, a commandment is a written or verbal requirement. A believer must understand the significance of a commandment. Exodus 31:18 describes how God gave His people the Ten Commandments.

### On Your Own

How many of the Ten Commandment can you name? List them below

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 1. statutes and the rules.** *Statutes* are boundaries that must not be crossed.

*Rules* are from God and are related to the concept of God's justice. **teach.** Jesus was called "rabbi" or teacher in John 1:49; 6:25. Teaching is a vital necessity between parent and child. Parents are given this task by God to instruct their children in the ways of God.

### Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share one commandment, one statute, and one rule all people may face in today's world—to help the group better understand Deuteronomy 6:1.

**Verse 2. you . . . your son . . . your son's son.** We are given these commandments, statutes and rules for a purpose. They are for us, our children and our grandchildren. This is God's way of making sure His laws are obeyed and passed down from generation to generation. **fear the LORD.** This phrase is repeated throughout the Bible in such places as Exodus 20:20; Psalm 111:10; 128:1.

### Discussion Question

What is the reason God wants us to fear Him? Do you think the Christians closest to you fear Him? Discuss why or why not.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 2. days may be long.** Everyone seems to want a long and happy life. People spend thousands of dollars trying to look younger and live longer. God has called us to live His way in

happiness and fulfillment. Parents are instructed to teach God's way to their children.

**Verse 4. Hear, O Israel!** The passage that begins here is called the Shema and is probably the most repeated passage from the Old Testament. **heart . . . soul . . . might.** God instructed Moses to lead the people to love Him with the totality of their being. What a great thing for a parent to pass on to their children. To love God with everything they have, every day of their lives is a wonderful way for children to know God and follow Him. Some parents solely focus on leaving their children wealth and property, but the Shema is both priceless and everlasting. Deuteronomy 11:18 repeats this instruction for parents to deliver to their children.

### **Assignment Two Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share practical thoughts about what loving God with all your (1) heart, (2) soul, and (3) might means.

### **Studying the Passage**

**Verse 6. These words . . . on your heart.** In this context, the word *heart* does not refer to the actual, physical heart but to the center of things—as in Matthew 12:40, where Jesus says He will spend three days “in the *heart* of the earth” following the crucifixion. We are to place God's commandments, statutes and rules deep within the center of our existence. We are to make this an example in our own lives that our children can see and want to follow.

**Verse 7. diligently.** To be diligent is to be consistent. The Hebrew term refers to staying the course and not giving up. Christ modeled this in Mark 1:35 as He got up early to spend time with His Father in prayer. He acknowledged the importance of regular communication with God by being *diligent* in His time of prayer.

### **On Your Own**

In the space below, write a list of three spiritual disciplines you think are important enough to be diligent in doing. After making your list, share your list with the others in the group. Discuss why we sometimes are not as diligent about them as we should be.

### **Assignment Three Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now share a short description of ways a person can spiritually lead their children based on the instructions in Deuteronomy 6:7.

### **Studying the Passage**

**Verse 7. sit in your house . . . walk by the way . . . lie down . . . rise.** This verse gives parents instructions about when the things of God are to be taught. Every day, parents are to teach their children the ways of God. Just think of the difference this would make in homes, in your churches, and in our world!

## **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

## **Since Last Week**

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to. . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

## **Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

## **Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

## **Prayer**

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

## **At Home: Nail It Down**

God has a strong word for His people in Deuteronomy 6:1–7. Parents are to be the primary spiritual guides in their homes. It is not the sole responsibility of the pastor, the youth pastor or anyone else. Children are looking to their parents for this type of spiritual leadership. Children will have a difficult time modeling it in their homes when they are adults if they have not experienced it as children in the home of their parents.

Jesus described Himself as the good shepherd in John 10:11. A shepherd was responsible for every aspect of the sheep's lives. He cared for them, protected them, disciplined them and guided them. If the shepherd did not diligently take care of his sheep, they could be hurt, be lost or even die. No parent wants that for their children. They want to follow Jesus' example and be a shepherd and spiritual leader to their families.

Consider these specific ways you are to guide your future children.

- You are to teach them His commandments, statutes, and judgments (Deuteronomy 6:1).
- You are to fear the Lord and to teach your children the same (Deuteronomy 6:2).
- You are to proclaim that the Lord is our God and that He is One (Deuteronomy 6:4).
- You are to love your God with your entire being—heart, soul, and might—and teach your children to do the same (Deuteronomy 6:5).
- You are to place His Word, the Bible, deep in the center of your existence—in your heart—and in the hearts of your children (Deuteronomy 6:6).
- You are to be consistent as you teach your children. You make it a matter of priority everywhere you are and every moment of your day (Deuteronomy 6:7).

### **Follow Up Question**

*Why are parents to be the primary spiritual leaders to their children, and why do you think many leave that to others?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.