

HOMIE SWEET

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WEEK FIVE

HOME SWEET HOME

A Seven-Day Devotional — Week 5

Parenting: Raised to Be Sent

Welcome to Week Five

This week, Home Sweet Home turns to parenting, walking through Deuteronomy 6 and its two central instructions: Love God, and Lead your family. There is no such thing as a perfect parent. The goal of parenting is to faithfully steward a child's dependence from us toward the only One who was ever meant to have it: God.

Each day moves through a different piece of that calling. No matter if you have kids, have raised kids already, want to have kids, or have no intention of having them, this week can help us be a blessing in lots of ways. We start by loving God with an undivided heart, leading from a full tank rather than an empty one, building an atmosphere instead of chasing a magic bullet, offering a loving touch and undivided time, speaking life through encouragement and delicate discipline, and finally, unfolding each child toward who God made them to be, with the patience of someone tending an orchard rather than demanding an instant harvest.

Each day includes the full text of Scripture, an expanded teaching section drawn from the sermon, three reflection questions, one practical step, and a closing prayer. Move through a day at a time and let God do His slow work.

DAY 1 Faithful Stewardship, Not Perfection

Deuteronomy 6:4 & Mark 9:36–37

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” “He (Jesus) took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.””

Every person who has raised a child, is raising a child, or hopes to one day, has this in common: None of us are or will be perfect at it. That's both the bad news and the good news. The goal of parenting was never perfection. It's faithful stewardship that shifts their dependence from us to God Himself. That shift shows us how heavy and holy the whole assignment of parenting feels. It is a weight of responsibility.

In Mark 9, the disciples tried to keep children away from Jesus, assuming He had more important things to do. Jesus' response reveals a powerful truth about parenting: Whoever welcomes a child welcomes him. Even the most unglamorous, unnoticed hours of parenting --- the diaper changes, the third bedtime request for water, the mess nobody sees, the eyerolls from a teenager --- are an act of worship to the Lord. How? The word **“welcome”** means to intentionally receive and value someone who may have nothing to offer you in return. That's what it means when parents say that it's a “thankless job” sometimes. To welcome a child isn't just to have them in your home. It's to make room for them in your life. It involves time, attention, affection, patience and presence. Jesus is saying: When you receive this little one (and all that goes with them), you are receiving Me.

In Deuteronomy 6, God had just given Moses the Ten Commandments which is the foundation for how Israel would live. Moses immediately directed his attention to parents. This was intentional. It shows us how central parenting is to the whole story of a people staying faithful to God across generations. As one person said, “Christianity is only one generation away from extinction.” What you do as a mom, dad, grandparent, aunt, uncle or friend makes a difference in keeping the faith alive for generations.

The big idea underneath the whole passage is this: A parent's priority is to gradually shift a child's dependence from the parent to God. We raise children, not to need us

forever, but to know they will always need God. When a child is born, they rely on you for absolutely everything. For a season, you are their entire world. But over time, we aren't to stay the permanent center of that universe. It's to point to the only ONE who was ever meant to hold that place.

Deuteronomy 6 gives us two instructions: Love God and Lead your family. You can't do one without the other. Your relationship with God as a parent (or insert your role!) isn't a separate project from parenting. It's the spring from which the whole task of parenting draws.

This is the starting point for anything with God. It doesn't begin with us trying to be perfect and getting our stuff in line. It doesn't begin with parenting strategy or techniques for discipline or connection. It begins with us getting right with God. The greatest influence a child has on their spiritual life are their parents. Your relationship with God is essential, because you're not building a legacy that ends with you.

Reflection

- Where has the pressure of “getting it right” as a parent quietly replaced the calling to be faithfully stewarding what God gave you?
- How does seeing ordinary, unnoticed caregiving as an act of worship change how you feel about it?
- In practical terms, what does it look like this week to point your child toward God rather than toward yourself as their center?

Take It Further

Identify one ordinary, unglamorous parenting task you do this week and offer it to God as an act of worship rather than just getting through it.

Prayer

Father, thank you that this task was never about achieving perfection. Help me steward my children faithfully, and use even my most ordinary, unnoticed moments with them as worship. Point their hearts toward you, not toward me. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 2 Love God With All

Deuteronomy 6:4–5

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

Verse 4 is known as the Shema. It is a prayer a devout Jew would recite morning, noon, and night. It became so centrally woven into the rhythm of their day. Verse 5 tells you what to do with God: Love him with all your heart. Not a percentage of your heart set aside for God among other priorities. All of it.

The truth is that the enemy of our souls doesn't need to make anyone hate God. He only needs to keep them from loving God with all their heart. Think about it in terms of a relationships. Is it worse to have someone openly despise you outside of a relationship or someone in a relationship who doesn't take you seriously or listen to you? If we're not careful, we can hand our kids that same fractional devotion of our heart toward God. A partial devotion to God instead of a whole one. Unfortunately, If God is one priority among many for a parent, He may become no priority at all for the child watching.

Think about how a flu shot works. A small amount of flu is injected, just enough to build immunity, but not enough to make you sick. The same thing can happen unintentionally in a home. Kids can get enough of God to become immune to Him. A little bit of church, a little bit of prayer, an occasional “we believe in Jesus,” but never enough to actually catch it. They end up knowing about God without really knowing Him personally. The difference between those two is enormous. Even the devil knows about God.

I've watched this happen to families gradually. Parents will pour themselves into giving their kids more than they had growing up. It might be more activities, more opportunities, a nicer car, or a bigger house. None of that is wrong in itself. But somewhere in the busyness, a family can drift from being God-centered to being child-centered. It's easy to make the whole household revolve around a kid's schedule, success, and happiness instead of everyone, together, revolving around Jesus.

It generally shows up when we're too busy for worship and constantly running on empty in the one area where we need our tank to be full. The problem is: Kids notice.

Nothing said or modeled outside the walls of church means much if church, worship, and God himself aren't treated as a real priority inside the home. The Shema was never meant to be recited and set aside. It was meant to shape an entire life, visibly, in front of watching children.

Reflection

- Where might your children be getting just enough of God to become immune, rather than enough to know him?
- Has your family drifted from God-centered toward child-centered in ways that felt reasonable at the time?
- What's one place where your actions communicate that worship is optional, even if your words say otherwise?

Take It Further

This week, let your children see you prioritize worship or prayer even when it's inconvenient. Let them see God as your top priority.

Prayer

Lord, I don't want to love you with a fraction of my heart, and I don't want to hand my children that fraction either. Draw my whole heart toward you, and let my children see it clearly, in the ordinary moments as much as the church ones. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 3 You Can't Give from an Empty Tank

Zechariah 4:6

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."

This whole message hinges on: The closer a parent gets to Jesus, the more they actually have to give their kids. It's tempting to treat spiritual growth and parenting as

two separate projects running in parallel. They aren't. One feeds the other. Without the first, the second runs dry no matter how many books get read or systems get tried.

No parent has, on their own, the patience, wisdom, and forgiveness required to raise a child well day after day, year after year. Those aren't personality traits some people happen to have more of. They're fruit that grows out of a real, ongoing relationship with God. Fruit doesn't grow on a vine that's been cut off from its source. Staying connected to God regularly is vital.

When the Old Testament leader Zerubbabel faced a discouraging and impossible assignment, the prophet Zechariah didn't hand him a strategy. He said: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit." That's not a nice saying to make someone feel better. This is God's instruction that we can't parent on willpower alone.

If you're a parent, this idea that you don't have to do this alone should actually be refreshing for you to know. The pressure and exhaustion of parenting is real. Very often, it's often a tank problem. You cannot pour out what you haven't first received yourself. You cannot receive those things apart from actual time with God.

This is why the order in Deuteronomy 6 matters so much: Love God first, THEN lead your family second. That's not because leading matters less, but because it's impossible to sustain it apart from the first command. A parent trying to lead well from an empty spiritual tank will eventually run out. If my life is an example, it's usually at the exact moment their child needs patience the most.

Before reaching for something else to rely upon, start by asking an honest question. How full is your tank? Strategy without the Spirit is just willpower wearing a plan's clothing. Parenting through the difficult seasons requires more time in prayer, the Word and community than the easier seasons.

Reflection

- Where in your parenting have you been relying on willpower and strategy instead of the Spirit's actual filling?

- What does your current rhythm of time with God look like and is it enough to sustain what parenting asks of you?
- When was the last time you ran dry with your kids in a way that traced back to your own empty tank?

Take It Further

Before your next hard parenting moment this week, pause for thirty seconds and ask God to fill you first. Practice this as a rhythm, not a one-time fix.

Prayer

Father, not by my own might or willpower, but by your Spirit. Fill my tank before I try to pour into my children. Give me the patience, wisdom, and forgiveness that only come from staying close to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 4 An Atmosphere, Not an Event

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 & Psalm 90:12

*“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” ...
“Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”*

Notice what Moses doesn't say here. He doesn't say, have one significant God-talk at the right age and consider the job done. Take them to confirmation and get them baptized and that's all. Nope. He says: When you sit, when you walk, when you lie down, when you rise. All day, every day. The Lord is to be woven into the ordinary rhythm of life. Spiritual leadership in a home isn't a scheduled event. It's an atmosphere you create intentionally.

Kids don't need a perfectly executed thirty-minute devotional every night to grow spiritually. They need to watch faith being lived out loud and leaking out in the sitting and walking and rising of an ordinary day. Atmosphere is built over time and not

delivered in a single conversation. It takes time develop a Spirit-led home. It's also sometimes very messy. That's ok. God deals with our messes too.

So where does a parent even begin building that atmosphere intentionally? Start with the end in mind. Psalm 90:12 says to number our days and to get a heart of wisdom. From birth to leaving home, a child has roughly 936 weeks. One father gave his daughter and son-in-law a jar with 936 marbles with instructions to remove one each week as a physical reminder of how finite their time with their child actually is.

The Bible says to number our days to get a heart of wisdom. How does that work? When I worked in a print shop years ago, we had to recalibrate the printers very often. Once in the middle of a big job, our boss noticed that all the books were being printed with the words starting in the middle of the page. The culprit? We were so busy with getting the job done we didn't calibrate the printer.

Sometimes that happens to us in parenting. We get so busy with life we forget to recalibrate. When you number your days and begin with the end in mind, you realize you don't have forever with your kids. It causes you to recalibrate your priorities. Recalibration means you look at your priorities more intentionally: What are we really doing here as a parent? Did I show up for them this week? Did I say what needed to be said? Once that week is gone, we don't get it back.

Beginning with the end in mind means asking directly: Who do I want my child to become by the time they leave this home? What do I want them to know, to love, to be able to do? I want them to know they are loved by God and by me and to love God themselves. Able to treat others with honor and respect. Able to make wise decisions and take responsibility for their choices. Once that destination is clear, the everyday decisions --- phones, curfews, money, freedom --- stop being just about getting through today and become part of a wiser plan.

Instead, they become opportunities to prepare a child for what we're praying they become tomorrow. This is what turns an ordinary week into part of an atmosphere rather than just 936 marbles quietly disappearing from a jar.

Reflection

- If someone numbered your last week the way this devotional describes, what would it reveal about your presence with your kids?
- Who do you want your child to become by the time they leave your home? Can you name it specifically?
- What's one ordinary thing you could do to help your kids prepare for life better?

Take It Further

Write down, in one or two sentences, who you're praying your child becomes by the time they leave home. Keep it somewhere you'll see it when the next hard decision comes up.

Prayer

Lord, teach me to number my days as a parent, and to build an atmosphere of faith rather than waiting for one big moment. Help me see this week as one I'll never get back and help me spend it well. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 5 Loving Touch and Undivided Time

Mark 10:13–16

“And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them ... And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.”

Jesus doesn't merely pat these children on the head. He pulls them into his arms and embraces them. The word used for touch here means *to embrace*. This is the first of four concrete ways to lead a child well: **loving, appropriate touch**. Some people are naturally affectionate while others weren't raised that way and instinctively pull back. When we have kids, however, that excuse doesn't hold. Affection can, and must, be learned from parent to child in order for them to understand and have healthy boundaries of touch.

This matters especially for daughters moving into their teenage years. This season is exactly the time when a father's affection matters most. It's also the season many

fathers instinctively start pulling back often out of awkwardness, because her body is changing. It can be confusing and hurtful especially to daughter that her father doesn't engage in loving, appropriate touch. 1st Peter 5:8 says that satan is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for opportunities like these. When we retreat from our daughters and sons, especially as men, the world steps in with hurt. When a child learns healthy, appropriate touch at home, they're equipped to recognize --- and refuse --- anything less than that from someone else later.

The second way is undivided time. Someone once asked a group of kids how to spell "love." One answered: T-I-M-E. It's easy to fall into what could be called pit-stop parenting. The twelve-second NASCAR exchange at night: How was school? Fine. Homework done? Yeah. Love you? Good night. Quick, efficient, and almost entirely hollow. Undivided time doesn't get squeezed into the leftover minutes around everything else. Everything gets arranged around it. That might be a standing daddy-daughter date, a regular fishing trip, running to Market Basket together, or simply an uninterrupted stretch with no other agenda but connection and conversation. Every family has time for whatever it chooses to have time for. Our calendar reveals priorities more honestly than our words.

Presence isn't something that can be made up for later with presents. A missed evening doesn't get refunded by a bigger gift down the road. The currency a child needs is our time --- undivided, unhurried, uninterrupted --- and no amount of compensation later can substitute for it.

Touch and time are spiritual leadership in bodily form. A child who is regularly embraced and regularly given undivided attention is being taught something true about how they're loved, long before they're old enough to understand any of the words used to explain it.

Reflection

- Where do you naturally pull back from physical affection with your kids, and what would it take to lean in instead?
- How much of your time with your children currently looks like a pit stop versus undivided presence?

- What's one recurring, protected block of undivided time you could build into your family's rhythm?

Take It Further

This week, schedule one block of genuinely undivided time with each child. No phone, no multitasking. Protect it the way you'd protect an important meeting.

Prayer

Father, help me give my children the loving touch and undivided time they need, not just the leftovers of a busy schedule. Teach me that presence, not presents, is what they're really asking for. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 6 Encouraging Words and Delicate Discipline

Proverbs 18:21 & Ephesians 6:4

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue". ... "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Jesus not only touched the children brought to Him, He blessed them. He built them up with words. Proverbs 18:21 says death and life are in the power of the tongue. The Bible doesn't mince words about how important words are for people. It's interesting that the one-time the Bible records the Father speaking directly over Jesus, He says: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." It wasn't 'Hey Jesus, about this hesitancy of going to the Cross. You gotta get with the program here!' They were words of affirmation spoken before any accomplishment or any challenge He ever faced.

Most of us parents are better at catching a child doing something wrong than doing something right. Correction comes naturally to us, but praise takes intention. A child who only ever hears correction learns, over time, to avoid the parent giving it. Why? Because they simply don't feel good in their presence. Think about it: Would you? Words of encouragement aren't soft, sentimental parenting. They're food for a soul that is genuinely starving for it.

The fourth way to lead is delicate discipline. Ephesians 6:4 pairs the command to discipline with a direct warning: Don't provoke your children to anger. How discipline is delivered matters every bit as much as whether it happens at all. Biblical discipline is guidance shaped by love. It's not punishment fueled by a parent's own frustration in the moment.

When discipline is delivered in anger, a child doesn't hear the correction. They hear the rage. They don't learn they made a poor choice. They learn to be afraid of a parent. Only one of those outcomes builds character; the other simply builds fear. Fear teaches avoidance, not wisdom. When a child fails, they will be afraid to bring it to a parent because of what the parent will do. This can lead to all kinds of secrets that hurt a young person in the long run. If a young man can't tell his father about his struggles with lust, because he fears him, then that can lead to a lifetime of shame and hiding in sexual sin. If a young woman can't tell her mother the pressures she feels to look perfect, then that can lead to a lifetime struggle with food and their own appearance. That's why it matters how you discipline.

The best discipline is communicated ahead of time, clearly connected to the actual offense, so a child understands the consequence before they break the rule. That knowledge changes everything about how discipline lands. When they realize the parent isn't against them and this is the result of the consequence for their actions, a parent can be present with them in it, even sad alongside them, rather than delivering it as an act of personal anger.

Discipline as love versus punishment as anger is the difference between a home that produces shame and one that produces responsibility. Done well, discipline is proof of love, not evidence against it. When it's linked with genuine encouragement, it gives a child both the boundaries and the affirmation every growing person needs.

Reflection

- Do your children hear more correction or more encouragement from you in an average week?

- When you discipline, is it more often planned and connected to the offense, or reactive and driven by your own frustration?
- What's one specific, true thing you could say to build up a child this week, unprompted by any accomplishment?

Take It Further

Speak one specific, unprompted word of encouragement to each of your children today, and if a discipline conversation is needed this week, plan it calmly ahead of time rather than delivering it in the heat of the moment.

Prayer

Lord, let my words build life, not death, in my children. Where discipline is needed, let it be guided by love, not fueled by my anger. Teach me to be as quick to encourage as I am to correct. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 7 Unfolded, Not Molded — Raised to Be Sent

Psalm 128:3

“Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.”

Children are compared here to olive shoots. There are over five hundred distinct varieties of olive trees. Each one is grown, pruned, and cared for differently depending on its purpose. All of them are olive trees and yet, none of them are identical. That's a fitting picture for parenting. They're all yours and yet none are the same. Each child requires different care to flourish.

God made people in his image, not in our image. This means a child was never meant to be a spitting image of the parent raising them. They were meant to be a spitting image of their Creator. Our children are to be unfolded, not molded. Molding presses something into a shape that you already have in mind. Unfolding trusts that God already placed specific things inside this person, and the parent's job is to draw those things out, not overwrite them.

Picture a parent who was a gifted athlete raising a son who isn't. He might be remarkable with computers, numbers, or music. That's simply how God folded him. Pruning him toward the parent's own image would work against the very design God placed there. God numbers the days and puts good gifts in each child. He has placed good things in you that are very different than me. That's a good thing. Each one of us get a chance to play a role in the great drama that God is unfolding on earth. My part is different than yours. Your part is different than your child's part. How could you help unfold rather than mold your child into the person God has called them to be?

One of the ways to be a better parent is to start thinking like a grandparent. Grandparents are famously more relaxed with grandchildren than they ever were with their own kids. How many stories have you heard of parents being shocked their kids are allowed to do something by their grandparents that they never would have been allowed to do? One of the reasons for this is that a grandparent's ego is not usually wrapped up in how a grandchild turns out. A young parent can easily start seeing a child's behavior as a referendum on their own parenting. That can produce all kinds of pressure and anxiety rather than love. Grandparents often hold their grandkids more loosely and allow for failure and freedom than their parents do. When we let go of our own egos, we can allow God to unfold our children in His time as we seek to do our best to influence them. We can leave them in God's hands instead of neurotically trying to control them and mold them into our image.

When an olive tree is young, it's staked to help them grow straight. But the staking is done loosely so that it doesn't scar. One of the hard truths that parents have to face sometimes is that they're staking their kids too tightly. It's fear but it's dressed up as care. We don't want them to make the same mistakes we did. We don't want them to be corrupted by the world. That is a good instinct and godly impulse. There is nothing wrong with that. It's HOW we do it that matters. Like discipline, when we hold too tightly, we inevitably lose control of them (.38 special reference firmly intended). Olive trees, like parenting, require patience. In an olive tree, there's no significant harvest for ten to fifteen years. That's true for parenting. You are tending an orchard and orchards take time. But if you keep developing the atmosphere and parent the soil that your child is

growing up in, like an olive tree, it will be fruitful for generations long after you're gone. The oldest tree on the planet is an olive tree that is almost five thousand years old. It is STILL fruitful after all these years.

That's the goal. The goal was never to keep your children forever. It was to raise them up to send them out. In Genesis 8, when Noah sent out the dove in the ark, it returned with an olive branch. Later, he sent the dove out again and it didn't return because it found a new home. We have lead them well enough to send them out into the hands of the ONE who was meant to hold them forever.

Reflection

- Where have you been tempted to mold a child into your own image rather than unfold who God made them to be?
- In what area are you staking a child too tightly out of anxiety rather than trust?
- What would it look like to parent this season with patience for a harvest you may not see for years?

Take It Further

Name one specific trait or interest in your child that differs from your own and take one deliberate step this week to nurture it rather than redirect it toward your own preference.

Prayer

Father, help me unfold my children instead of molding them — to see what you've placed in them and draw it out with patience. Teach me to hold them with open hands, tending faithfully even when I can't yet see the fruit. And when the day comes, give me the courage to send them out well. In Jesus' name, amen.