

My Dad, the Rock Star
Deut 6:1-9, 20-25, Joshua 4:1-7

Friends that video we just watched illustrates so well how children watch and learn from us as parents – maybe it made you think of a time when you imitated your mother or father, or perhaps a time when you noticed one of your children imitating you.

Now it probably doesn't surprise you to see that we influence our children in these sorts of everyday matters, but maybe you wonder if you can really influence them in significant matters, especially about things like faith and church and following Christ.

Well friends, you'd be interested to know that back in 1990 the Search Institute conducted a survey about what the major religious influences were in the lives of youth from grades 7 to 12 were, and guess what?

They discovered that parents were the number one religious influence; moms were first, dads a close second, with the

pastor coming third, and followed by a tie for fourth place between grandparents and church youth group.

So, given the amount of influence parents have in their children's lives, if we are truly concerned about raising our kids so they turn out ok emotionally, physically and spiritually - then I think its safe to say that parenting, especially Christian parenting, is more about us as parents, than it is our kids.

Now I know in a series like this one, it's tempting to want to focus on our kids and the challenges their behaviors present to us. And we might expect that the bible will give us some divine tips guaranteed to resolve the challenges of bedtime routine, temper tantrums, unfinished homework, sloppy chores and broken curfews, and the rest... so that our kids will stay on the straight and narrow, at least until they leave home.

And I can understand that desire, because let's face it, at its best parenting is a tough job and at its worst it can be a nightmare – and we want all the help we can get and the bible does speak to some of that and we will cover a bit of it in the next couple of messages.

But – regardless of how many tricks and tips you know to help you with the tough job of parenting, if you don't put on your own oxygen mask on first, then all those tricks and tips are going to be much help to you or your children.

In other words since God is the one who created and designed what it means to be a parent, you need to make sure that your relationship with Him is sorted out first – and when it is... much of what you need to know as a parent falls naturally into place.

And this morning the good news I want to share with you friends is that scripture speaks to us as parents about what it means to have our relationship with God sorted out, and it provides us with good advice on how to be intentional about introducing our kids to God, and helping them develop a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 6 explains about how we must be experts at teaching the commands of God to our children – the ten commandments written on tables of stone – rock

Joshua 4 tells about how some of the Israelite fathers were to take stones- rocks and build a monument after they had crossed the Jordan River.

So – pardon the bad pun - these are passages in Deuteronomy and Joshua about being “rock” stars parents

In other word they encourage us and show us how to excel at teaching God's commands, and how to build monuments to remember God's amazing deeds and we're going to look at four key elements of what it means to be a “rock” star parent.

So the first thing we need to get in place as parents is to know our own Egypt. In Deuteronomy 6:20-21 it says *“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.*

The nation of Israel came into a special, intimate, close relationship with God because He delivered them from slavery.

Prior to that He was a distant God - the God of their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – but after that fateful night when all the firstborn males in Egypt were struck down – God became their deliverer.

He brought them out of Egypt and proclaimed that He was their God, and they were His people.

Friends, as parents we must ensure that we can say to our children when they ask us about why we go to church, read the bible, pray to Christ, give 10% of our income, and serve others

– that its because once we were slaves to unbelief, we were captives to doubt, we were blind and couldn't see the truth, we were victims of our own bad choices, our lives were offensive to God – but God stepped in and delivered us anyways!

Now we do all these things because it is how we show our gratitude for being saved. This is how we show that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.

So how can you tell your Egypt? – simple, what experience have you had where God has stepped in done something in your life and it has resulted in a closer, more intimate relationship with Him?

Of course the grand story of the scripture tells us that for all of us, our Egypt is being affected by sin and rebelling against God in some way, and our deliverance from that occurred when Jesus Christ put our sinful nature to death on the cross and was resurrected into new life, and that new life lives in us through the Holy Spirit.

But each of us also needs to be able to tell our children how that grand story has played out in some specific way in our own life. How have you experienced Christ's forgiveness at work in your life?

If you can't say that you have, then start today by praying for Christ to show you what you need deliverance from – unbelief, doubt, a hard heart, bad choices, pride?

Friends – what is your Egypt? How do you know Christ as your savior?

But friends, it gets better - God doesn't just forgive us of our sins in Jesus Christ – he also fulfills the promises that He makes. Deuteronomy 6:23 explains *“But he (God) brought us out from there (Egypt) to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors*

If you are familiar with the story – you'll remember the Promised Land is where dreams come true – it's a land flowing with milk and honey. God promised it to Abraham's descendents – and when the nation of Israel crossed over the Jordan River – that promise was fulfilled.

So what is your Jordan River? What promises do you know God has made to you that He has fulfilled, which ones are you still waiting for?

Again, in the grand story of scripture Israel's arrival in the Promised Land is a demonstration of how one day God will bring all his people into the new heavens and the new earth – this world will be made new – the Kingdom of God will come in fullness and sin and evil will be destroyed.

But until that day comes – God is at work making promises to people about what He wants to do in their lives, and fulfilling those promises as indicators of how He will one day fulfill that grand promise – to make all things new.

Here's a couple of examples – Jesus promised to give us the Holy Spirit! He also said *“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:12)*

So friends, how have you experienced the Holy Spirit at work in your life – through spiritual gifts, guidance, direction, comfort? What works have you been able to do like Jesus – set the captives free, heal the sick, feed the hungry...?

How have God's promises come to pass in your life? What is your Jordan River?

You see friends, we need to know our Egypt and our Jordan River because this ensures that we have the kind of covenant relationship that we can then work to pass on to our children.

And from Joshua 4 we see that one way to do this is by creating subtle monuments which cause your children to ask the question “what does this mean?” Then you have the opportunity to share about the relationship you have with God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ who fulfills his promises to you – and that this He also want to do this for your child.

And the monument needs to fit the promise – in Joshua chapter 4 we see how the stones for the monument came from the river, the last barrier to be crossed before the promise was fulfilled. And how there was to be 12 stones in this monument – one for each tribe, and they were stacked together to show how crossing into the Promised Land changed them from being wandering tribes into a unified nation.

Parents, spend some time thinking about what you can do, what you can create that will subtly draw the attention of your children and provide you with the opportunities to share what

promises God has fulfilled in your life and how He wants to do the same for your children.

But the subtly of passively arousing curiosity in children needs to be balanced out by actively looking for teachable moments with them in your day to day family routines.

In Deuteronomy 6:6-9 Israelite parents are instructed that *“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”*

Watching TV or movies, or what Movie stars do with their lives gives us lots of opportunities to talk with our kids about how we can be obedient or disobedient to God’s commands with regards to things like murder, stealing, adultery, and idolatry.

Listening to the lyrics of their favorite songs and talking about what they mean can help us to impress upon our children what it means to covet.

And if your kids like sports the consequences of winning at all costs can be a good illustration to help them understand idolatry.

But what is most important is being able to talk with your children about how difficult it can sometimes be to obey God's commands, and how sometimes we want to disobey - so that they come to understand what sin really is and how they too can experience Egypt where Christ delivers them and sets them free.

Friends, parents this is why you need to know what your Egypt is, because without that experience of deliverance, without that close intimate covenant relationship with God through Christ – these commandments, the 10 Commandments quickly degenerate into parental manipulation to ensure moral behavior instead being a way to live out our gratitude for salvation.

That's why Deuteronomy 6:6 says – *“these commandments I give you are to be upon your hearts”*

So – you want to be a “rock” star parent, then remember these four things

1. Know your Egypt
2. Know your Jordan
3. Build subtle monuments
4. Actively teach about obedience and forgiveness

Friends, God designed children to look up to us, to take their cues about what to think, how to feel – about who they are and what this life is about.

And while it's true that children are the future – who you are today as their parent will play a huge role in determining what that future turns out to be.

So friends, listen to God's advice – put on your own oxygen mask first, inhale the Holy Spirit – and with His help strive to be a “rock” star parent.

Amen.