

# Confident Parenting

The Lesson of the Shema: A Road Map to Confident Parenting

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I used a GPS for the first time only two weeks ago! It's an amazing invention.

The Global Positioning System is an electronic gizmo that sticks to your windshield or dashboard to help you navigate. You enter your destination and the GPS tells you precisely how to get there - where you are, when to turn, and the name of the highway or street you're on.

At one point I missed a turn, and all of a sudden this voice comes over the GPS: "Turn around as soon as possible." The GPS gave me so much confidence as I drove through unfamiliar territory.

Wouldn't it be nice if there was a GPS for Parents and Grandparents that would help us make all the right decisions and give us confidence that we're on the right road? Wouldn't that be helpful?

When Kathy was participating in a parenting class at her church, she explained to her 6-year-old daughter, Kayla, that she was taking a course to help make her a better mommy. The next Sunday, after church, Kayla had a temper tantrum in the church lobby because she was not getting her own way. Both mom and dad tried to calm her down. But with tears streaming down her face and in a loud voice, Kayla announced to her mother, "You told me you were taking a course to make you a better mommy. Well, it's not working!"

Shirley Ratcliff, "Kids of the Kingdom," Christian Reader (July/August 2003)

Where is that GPS for Parents when you need one?!

The good news is that we have a guidance system. It's contained in the Word of God. The Word of God has been handed down from one generation to the next for thousands of years. And the road map for confident parenting is actually contained in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is the section of Scripture that Jewish people call the *Shema*.

It begins with these words:

Deut 6:4 NIV

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*

In the Hebrew language, the word Shema literally means “to listen” or “to hear.” Each day in Orthodox Jewish homes, usually in the morning and the evening, the Shema is recited. It is used as a morning blessing, a bedtime prayer, and in special ceremonies such as the dedication of a new house or a wedding. Traditionally, the Shema was quoted every Sabbath, and the congregation would stand to recite these most holy words.

The Shema is so important that most Bible scholars say it was likely the first Scripture Jesus learned as a child. Before he could speak, walk, or read, he heard it every day.

The Shema shows us how to build a legacy of faith from generation to generation.

Deut 6:4-9 NIV

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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.*

What is the lesson of the Shema for confident parenting today?

### **1. The Shema teaches the importance of loyalty to God**

Deut. 6:5 NIV

*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

This is the part of the Shema that Jesus quoted when someone asked him which is the greatest commandment in the Law of God.

Matthew 22:36-38 NIV

*“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”*

*Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”*

With these words, he basically summarized the meaning of faith and life. With these words, he helps us keep the main thing the main thing in our families.

Families today can become distracted easily. We lose sight of the main thing, and then we wonder why our children resist spiritual guidance when they are teens or young adults.

Teaching our children to be faithful to God is the cornerstone of good parenting. I'm all for piano lessons, good grades, hockey teams, and swimming lessons, but the priority of teaching our kids true character and faithfulness to God is not even in the same league as sports and music and education.

Loyalty to God and obedience to the Scriptures has to become the top priority of every family in this church!

## 2. The Shema teaches the importance of transmitting our faith

Deut 6:6-7 NIV

*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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.*

In other words, at every opportunity parents are to take the leadership in teaching their children about being faithful to God. Yes, the church community has a role to play, but parents must take ownership of transmitting faith to the next generation. No one else can do that like a parent. There is nothing more important than the transmission of genuine faith to the next generation. Nothing.

Cal Ripken is a well known Major League baseball player who played his entire career with the Baltimore Orioles. He says the best advice he ever received about fatherhood came from a teammate named Tim Hulett. In one clubhouse conversation Hulett told Ripken, that children "are a blank tape, constantly running and recording information."

"Whose information do you want on that tape?," he asked. "Yours or somebody else's?"

Ripkin's icy-blue eyes lock on. "I want *my* information on that tape," he said.

Mark Hyman, Dad's Magazine (June/July 2000), p.66

Confident parents talk to their kids when they sit at home and when they walk along the road, when they go to bed and when they get up – they talk to their kids at all the natural family times during the day – because those blank tapes are constantly recording information.

The church is here to help. Kids Connections, Kids Club, Kids Camp, Junior High, Home Groups, Third Space, and all the rest of the excellent programs we offer are here to help, to assist, to supplement, but not to substitute for the transmission of faith that must come from parents and grandparents.

You have a job to do, and *that* job is Job One!

### 3. The Shema teaches the importance of constant reminders

Deut 6:8-9 NIV

*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.*

How is the love of God preserved and propagated from one generation to the next? With intentional action. Parents must rehearse the truth over and over and over again.

The Hebrews took this part of the Shema to mean that they should tie phylacteries to the forehead and left arm. Phylacteries are little boxes with Scripture verses inside – tied to the forehead and left arm. *Tie them as symbols on your hands.... Why? Because with our hands we bring God's presence into our daily work. Bind them on your foreheads.... Why? Because we need to think about God all day long. We need constant reminders of his presence and his Word in our lives.*

For today's Christian, this means we are to bring our faith and values into all aspects of our life and make it a natural part of the environments in which we live and work and study.

The Hebrews would also place a special case called a mezuzah on the doorpost of their homes. It served as a declaration that this house belonged to the Lord and this family was dedicated to serving God Almighty. What do you think they put inside the mezuzah? *The Shema*. Deuteronomy 6:4-9!

Obviously there is nothing magical about a wooden or metal box on a doorpost, but the idea that it represents is pretty cool – don't you think?! *The Lord is present in this house and everyone who lives here will follow Him!*

In his book *Revolutionary Parenting*, George Barna says there are three dominant approaches to parenting. *Parenting by default* is what Barna terms the path of least resistance. This approach is influenced by cultural norms and traditions. We just let the world around us dictate how we're going to raise our children. *Trial-and-error parenting* is based on the notion that every parent is an amateur at raising children. There are no absolute guidelines to follow, so the best that we can do is experiment, observe outcomes, and improve upon our successes and failures.

But the preferred approach to parenting was the least common approach. *Revolutionary parenting* takes what God says about life and family at face value and seeks to implement God's Word faithfully and consistently into family life.

What is your approach to parenting?

Perhaps the most startling difference in these approaches to parenting has to do with the desired outcomes.

Barna says,

*Parenting by default and trial-and-error are both approaches that enable parents to raise their children without the effort of defining their life.*

*Revolutionary parenting, which is based on one's faith in God, makes parenting a life priority.*

*Those who engage in revolutionary parenting define success as intentionally facilitating faith-based transformation in the lives of their children, rather than simply accepting the aging and survival of the child as a satisfactory result.*

Barna Update, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org) (4-9-07);

The Lesson of the Shema calls us to reject every perspective on parenting that does not include faith-based transformation. That spiritual makeover begins with the parents, and then it's passed on to the children. The GPS that God has given us is contained in Deuteronomy 6. And it works! It has worked now for thousands of years! But you have to turn it on, and you have to use it properly, in order for it to work.

Our intention here is to generate confident parenting, by the grace of God.

Let's recite the Shema together:

Deut 6:4-9 NIV

*Hear, O Heritage Park Church: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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.*

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What makes the Shema as described in the sermon a captivating road map for your family?
2. As you read the Deut 6:4-9 passage, what strikes you as important for your family or extended family?
3. Many people would say the Shema reflects the purpose of parenting and life. How can you incorporate this into your own family's purpose?
4. What is holding you back?
5. What steps can you take this week to bring the heart of the Shema closer to your family?
6. What do you hope results from your action steps?