

**Title:** This is Church!!! (Part #4)  
**Subtitle:** Bringing Church Home  
**Big Idea:** The home is the microcosm of the church  
**Goal:** Install conviction, not compliance.  
**Text:** Deuteronomy 6:4-9

**Introduction:**

*Several years ago, I received one of those chain emails from a prominent person in higher education which read: **Kids in Lock Haven, PA are Giving Up Their Christian Faith and Starting Satanic Churches because of Harry Potter Books.** The story went on to describe how ranks of satanic temples are now being filled with children because of the Harry Potter phenomenon. Though the story looked real, I felt like someone was pulling my leg, so I began to do a little research. After doing a little digging, I discovered that the story originated from a tongue in cheek satire site called **theonion.com** something like the **National Enquirer** or **Weekly World News** of the Internet. Besides the Potter story, **theonion.com** reported and **80lb toddler** and a story on **Bill Clinton losing his health insurance.** This only proves that story is a farce, but it does not address the issue of Harry Potter itself.*

I then asked several parents of their view of Potter. In my investigation, I have discovered a mixed bag of responses, but one tendency has surfaced. **Those who have read it have loved it and those who have not tend to demonize it.** So I thought I would find out for myself what all the craze was about. When I saw the first book for \$4.00 at Border's, I picked it up. To my surprise, I discovered a fascinated world of creative thought. I then asked my wife, Janae, to read it so we can discuss it together. After we both finished the book, we began to talk. Our discussion revolved around the question, **“What are we going to tell our son Matthew about Harry Potter when he asks us?”** He was only 5 at the time, but we knew he would ask some time soon. Yet, when the movie

comes out, I know many of his church and school friends will see it. Is Harry Potter a doorway to the devil or is it innocent childhood fantasy? As we began to talk, the bigger issue surfaced, “As Christians, what is the criteria for fantasy literature?” We allow Beauty and the Beast and Cinderella in our home, why not Harry Potter? Or to make it more personal. If Luke Skywalker had a wand in his hand rather than a light saber, would we condemn the Star Wars trilogy? The reason why I believe this question is worth asking is because as a parent I am committed to forge conviction in my child’s life and not just boundaries.

To tell a child, “No” and give no Biblical ground is to potentially sow the seed for future exploration and perhaps rebellion. As a former College Pastor and School Board member, I often wondered why graduation night or the first semester on a college campus became such a license to sin for so many Christians. Young adults raised in respected Christian homes went off and did things we all knew were wrong. Why? As far as I can discern, they respected the line only when the shadow of authority loomed over them. When that figure was removed (whether parental, pastoral or teacher), they went off and did what they wanted to do. As a parent, I don’t want this story to be the story of my children. I want to forge their fertile minds with the tools to evaluate Biblically the issues of our day. I want conviction, not compliance.

In the few minutes we have together this morning, I want to give you the tools on how to forge conviction in a child’s life or how to Leave a Legacy of Faith. I realize for most of us in this room, this topic may not seem applicable since you are not married or do not have kids. Please...do not turn the channel.

*In our world today, families are under attack. To get married and remain married is somewhat an oddity in our culture. In fact, Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family*

*claims than less than 5% of those married actually enjoy their marriage. The rest endure it. Similarly, the tensions between parent and child are at epidemic proportions in our society. So much so, that many parents “eye ball” their kids (conversation where the eyes engage with one another) less than 10 to 15 minutes a day.* **IF WE ARE EVER GOING TO MOVE TOWARD MATURITY IN THE CHURCH, THIS SACRED FRONT OF THE HOME MUST BE RETAKEN. IN MY OPINION, ANY FORM OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THAT IGNORES THIS CRITICAL SETTING IS SPURIOUS AND TANGENTIAL.**

Though this message may not meet an immediate need for you today, you will need it in the very near future. It is something, I believe many of you have never heard before. Let's pray together and then begin...

## Scripture Text:

Turn with me to Deuteronomy 6:1-9. I call this passage the “Family Commission. It reads:

These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, **so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.** Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

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.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

## Point Number 1 - The Addressee:

There are three points in this text that I want you to draw your attention to this morning. **FIRST, TO WHOM IS THE PASSAGE ADDRESSED.** You may simply say the people of Israel, but to be more specific, **it is to parents.**

Notice **verse 2**, “so that **your children and their children after them** may fear the Lord your God.”

**Verse 6-7**, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **Impress (sharpen) them on your children.**” (Conscious, consistent, transfer of God’s truth from the younger to the older).

And in **verse 20**, “In the future when **your son** asks you...”

The bottom line is this... ***Parents, and parents alone, have been given the JOY, RESPONSIBILITY and PRIVILEGE to introduce their children to Jesus Christ.*** Not the children’s pastor or the youth pastor or the Christian school teacher or Bob and Larry of Veggie Tales. Parents, and parents alone, are responsible. Now the parent can and should enlist others to help in this endeavor, **but never ever should a parent consign this great privilege to another person.** I hope that if God blesses you with children someday you will not relegate the joy of sharing the Gospel to some paid minister. Rather than having them find God at summer camp, what about in their bedroom with you at their knees telling the wonderful story of the Gospel.

Yet, whenever I hear a child coming to faith at a church camp in the mountains or at a kids meeting at church, I wonder, **why didn’t they come to faith in the home? Why wasn’t it the voice of their parents inviting them to pray the sinner’s prayer? Why weren’t Mom and Dad there at this sacred juncture of life? *My dear friends, until we***

*understand that discipleship begins in the home, we will never take this culture for Jesus Christ (2x).*

Personally, some of my favorite moments of the day are when I put my children to bed. Yes, I do enjoy it when they are down, but I am talking about that time while they are in bed, in their jammies and your read the Bible to them or tell them a story and then pray. I think that during these moments my son, Matthew has gotten saved 5x by now. Though I know in part, he is “parroting” my wishes, I do believe that somewhere beyond what my eyes can see are genuine seeds of faith taking root.

**THIS IS CHURCH!!!**

**Brothers and sisters, don't wait for summer camp or the visiting evangelist, lead them to Jesus yourselves.**

## Point Number 2 - The Setting

Which brings us to the second point: **THE SETTING**. Notice **WHERE** God says to **teach them**. Look again with me at verses 7-9: “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**.” **WHERE** do we teach our children the faith? In the **HOME** and on the **FREEWAY**. At the **BALL PARK** and on the **PLAYGROUND**. Watching **TELEVISION** and playing the **Wii**. **CHRISTIANITY IS DESIGNED FOR EVERYDAY LIVING**. It should never be relegated to a Sunday religion. The classroom for our children in life itself. **ALL THE TIME AND IN EVERY CONTEXT, PARENTS TEACH YOUR CHILDREN**.

***WHAT SHOULD WE IMPART TO OUR CHILDREN?** Everything about life and God should be imparted to our children. I find most of my own insecurities in life stem from the fact that I did not have a parental figure teach me how to do something (one of many results of my parents’ divorce in my life). For instance, I know nothing about cars. Each time I go to a mechanic, I just nod my head to what he is saying and pretend I know what it means. I don’t want him to know that he has some ignorant fool before him who doesn’t know what a carburetor does. The same is true for **home improvement**. I hate some jobs around the house because I have no clue on how to work on them. Part of discipling our children is instilling in them the knowledge of life we have (both the physical world and the spiritual one) so they can be free to learn from our mistakes if they are willing to listen.*

Unfortunately, many parents are too busy to teach their children. Homes have become more like Holiday Inns where everyone sleeps, but we rarely interact. Though I

can't recall the exact amount of time, I know the statistic an American parent spends with their child each day is embarrassingly small. Let me plant a seed now in your life that will guard your family structure. **Be home for dinner, baths and bed time.** These are sacred daily rituals which have huge inroads into your child's life. **Pray with them before they go to school each day. At the dinner table, read a Bible story. When they get hurt, put on the bactine, the bandaid and then pray with them. Place only one television in the home.** Making television and watching videos a family event something we all share and discuss together. If every room has a television, that only leads to further isolation. **Try not to answer the phone, read email or Facebook between 5 and 9pm.**

I believe that *“the home is a microcosm of the church”* (though some might say that “the church is a microcosm of the home”). Remember, the home came **BEFORE** the church. Practically, what does this mean? Simply put, **there should be a sense of continuity between the home setting and the church setting.** In fact, I believe all core Biblical concepts (worship, prayer, giving, evangelism, Bible study, prophesy, communion, foot washing, etc.) should be ingrained by parents to their children in the home.

**Story of Taylor and Matthew being filled with the Spirit.**

**Story of Footwashing.**

**Story of Lent.**

Too many kids view church like going through a cultural vortex **WHERE THE EVENTS OF ONE SETTING ARE INCONGRUENT WITH THE EVENTS OF ANOTHER.** Because of this, they fall into the trap modeled by their parents **THAT SETTINGS DICTATE SPIRITUALITY.** **We need to break the cycle climate controlled Christianity in our lives and our children.**

*One New Year's Eve, while I was a college pastor at Harbor light in the early 90's, we planned a “Line Dancing Event” at the church. If you know anything about line dancing,*

*there are no partners and it is synchronized. It was in our Activity Building. I picked the music, got someone to show us all the moves, and then decorated with Western style. I had about 75 young people signed up and ready to go until “Sister Spiritual” told the Senior Pastor about dancing on campus. I was called into his office and was asked to cancel the event. I asked him what Scripture verses do you want to give to these young people about why they can’t line dance. He then suggested we move the event off campus. I told him that we don’t want to go there. **If it is wrong on campus, it is wrong everywhere.***

**Don’t ever buy into a TWO-POT SYSTEM OF SPIRITUALITY - one pot of spiritual matters (going to church, reading your Bible, giving at church, singing in the choir) and one pot for non-spiritual matters (playing sports, watching TV, surfing the net, listening to music, reading books). The Bible clearly says there is only ONE POT where EVERYTHING IS SPIRITUAL. Paul says it this way:**

Col. 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

### Point Number 3 - The Content

The final point, I want to draw from this text is the content of our teaching. According to Deuteronomy 6, **WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN?** Look with me again at verse 1 (“these commands, decrees and laws...”) and again at verse 6 (“these commandments...”). **What commands, decrees, and laws are the Lord talking about?** Look back one chapter and you will find the answer. **It’s the 10 commandments. We, parents, are commanded by God to teach our children the 10 commandments.** Unfortunately, the 10 commandments have become simply more of a political vice for us rather than what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls the “law of life.” Think about it for a moment. **When was the last time you heard a sermon on the 10 commandments or sat in a Sunday school class on the 10 commandments? Do you know where to find the 10 commandments in your Bible? How many of the 10 commandments can you recite from memory?** For those of us from a high church background, this may not be an issue. Historically, the 10 commandments, the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostle’s Creed have been the heart of the church’s catechism’s. Unfortunately, Pentecostals tend to have a narrow view church history and tend to focus and value more of what has happened after 1906 than what the church taught its children for 1900 years.

When my son Matthew was 3 years old, I taught him the 10 commandments. Obviously, I had to reword them for his age. It goes like this: 1) “Worship on God.” 2) “No idols.” 3) “Don’t use Jesus’ name in bad way.” 4) “On God’s day, worship God.” 5) “Obey your mommy and daddy.” 6) “Don’t kill anyone.” 7) “Mommy and Daddy are to love one another.” 8) “Don’t steal.” 9) “Don’t lie.” 10) “Don’t want what other people have.” 1-3) Teaches them how to relate to God. 4) Teach them the importance of spiritual refreshing. 5) Teach them to respect their mommy and daddy. 6) Teach them to

value life. 7) Teaches them that they are welcome member to the family and not center stage. 8) Teaches them to respect other people by respecting their stuff. 9) Teaches them to tell the truth. 10) Teaches them to be happy with what they have.

When teaching the 10 commandments, **realize that each negative command has a positive corollary that should also be emphasized.** For instance, if we are told in the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment not to kill, then the naturally corollary is to value life. This includes the life of the **elderly** as well as in the **womb**. Life of **different cultures, languages** and even **religions**. I tell my kids **that it is honoring and right to respect all people because God's wants us to value life.**

Whenever my children have done something wrong, almost without exception, we can go back to the 10 commandments and analyze what God expected.

When we go over a person's house, I ask my kids what the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment is. He responds, "Don't steal." I then ask him that if we are not supposed to steal, what are we supposed to do. After a long, blank stare, I then remind him **that we value people by valuing their stuff.** Therefore, don't jump on the couch, don't play in a certain room, don't track mud in the house. Let's show our appreciation to our hosts, by honoring their stuff.

When they struggle obeying mom and dad, I sit down with them and try to explain "why?" using Biblical references. If they still are wrestling because they simply don't like the verdict, I ask them to quote the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment and then remind them, "If you can't obey an authority who you can see (which is mom and dad), how will you ever follow an authority you can not see (which is God).

Right now the big issue in our house is **music**. What songs do we allow and which one don't. Let me be clear. The decision here has nothing to do with beat and everything

to do with lyrics. We print out the lyrics, compare it with the Scripture and see if it is God honoring. That does not mean every lyric has to have the name of Jesus in it. It simply needs to be a theme that is congruent with the Scriptures and strengthens one's soul. The same can be said of video games.

One last note parents, **it is important that you put God's Word as the center of authority in your home and not you.** There are several reasons for this:

1. This shows your kids there is no double standard - one for children and one for adults.

Chances are that if it is not right for them, it is not right for you and I.

2. It gives them the opportunity to call us on actions that are inconsistent with God's Word.

Also, if you put yourself there, they will eventually call you on it. Few of us are good enough to live consistently the standards we put on our kids.

3. By making God's word central it sensitizes them to His voice and ways.

I grew up in "because I told you so" world. When I was on my own, I didn't have that voice so I had nothing to guide me.

By putting the word of God as the authority, then when issues arise, we go to the Scriptures together as the guideline on how to live. We prepare for that time when they are away from the shadow of authority (parent, pastor or teacher) and they can make decisions on their own. That is the true sign of good parenting and the goal of godly parenting - when our children make God-honoring decisions on their own.

**The goal of parenting is to forge conviction, not compliance.** Parents have a huge door of influence to walk through especially in those early formidable years. I don't believe the Great Commission of Matthew 28 in the NT has superseded the Family Commission of Deuteronomy 6 in the OT.

## Conclusion:

Is Harry Potter the Doorway to the Devil or is he Innocent Childhood Fantasy? If we want our children to be compliant, we can draw a line, give no justification and then hang a heavy penalty over their heads if they cross it. If we want to build conviction in your child, you will need to read two books: Harry Potter and the Bible and then evaluate Potter based upon Biblical principles and not on the satirical writers of theonion.com. Use the 10 commandments to view Potter and begin to ask questions like: 1) What values are esteemed in Potter? 2) How does Potter value life? 3) What view of God and supernatural does Potter have? 4) How are parents viewed in Potter? Once you have these answers then you can pray and discuss with your spouse whether or not you will allow your child to read the book. If you say, “No,” you can back your answer with solid, Biblical principles. Or perhaps you will read it together with them helping them process some of these issues as you encounter them together. Whatever answer you give them as parents, make sure it has substance based on the God’s Word. **Our goal as parents is conviction, not compliance.**

*“If you win the whole world, yet lose your family, in the ledger of life there is still great loss.”*

Roger Valci