

Cultivating Love and Faith: Families and Community | Deuteronomy 6:5-7; 1 John 4:7-12

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daley preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living.

We're delighted to share this sermon with you. Well, it's definitely great to be with you all here online as we're just continuing our sermon series.

We're starting off this new year with this idea of building community from little hearts to loving hands. And the idea of this sermon series is focusing intentionally on children and on young families.

And also what it means for us as the body of Christ as the local church to focus on being present in the community. You know, as a parent, one of the challenges of having children is juggling the day to day.

I should know maybe a little bit about that with having five little ones. But my heart goes out to parents that are out there, the ones that have maybe one child or maybe they have 10 children.

[1 : 08] People that are constantly on the go, they're focusing on the day to day activities, taking care of their children. Maybe they're taking their children to soccer practice or they're focusing on rock climbing.

Parents are intentionally focusing on the needs and the care of their children, which is a wonderful thing that God calls us to do. And it's a responsibility for a parent to care for your children.

And much like how children, they need to be fed and cared for. There is a need for children to learn and to grow and to be in a safe environment where they learn about Jesus Christ, where they learn about who God is and also they have fun in doing so.

You know, the church has been a place where people can come to know the Lord but also experience the love of Christ. And that is the message we'll be going over today.

I'm titling this message, Cultivating Love and Faith, Families and Community. Family is so important today as it was in biblical times.

[2 : 13] It is so important that we as the church, that we focus on the next generation to know who Jesus Christ is. When we think about small babies or even to teenagers, think of them as the next generation of the church that they need to know who Jesus Christ is, to have that knowledge of who Jesus Christ is, to make a decision for the Lord and to be saved by believing in Him.

I'm always reminded of that verse in John chapter 6, verse 47, which says, truly I say to you, this is Jesus Christ speaking. Whoever believes has eternal life.

So let's think of how children can have fun being in a safe environment but also come to know the Lord. You know, children being so innocent and they're so authentic.

Sometimes they're more authentic than us adults are. I find that my son at times is more honest and he's blunt, but you know what? He tells the truth and that's something that's wonderful.

I encourage us as a church to cultivate love and to really focus on how we can exhibit the love of Christ to others, but specifically to those who don't know who Jesus Christ is.

[3 : 31] Let us focus on children, that we as the body of Christ, that we as the church community, that we can exhibit that love to others. And our main passages that we'll be focusing on is going to be Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 5 through 7 and 1 John chapter 4, verses 7 through 12.

As always, in any verse that we do, we look at the context and the connection and the application. So we look at what's going on in scripture and how is this verse or set of verses?

How is this connected with other verses in scripture? And then finally, we focus on how can we apply this today? How can this be applied to our personal life and how can this be applied to us as the church?

So I want us to think of how we can be present in the community and how we can extend the invitation, right? How can we invite people to come to know Christ?

How can we invite people to come to the church? How can we do that? And I want you to think about that for this week is what can you do to invite someone to experience Jesus Christ or to be a part of the body of Christ?

[4 : 48] So with that, I wanna go ahead and pray for our sermon and we'll continue to go. And Father, we come before you this morning digitally, online as the body of Christ.

And we just ask that you're here with us this morning and we ask that the words that are spoken speak truth that they honor and glorify you. And we ask that for everyone who is listening to this message, whether they're here locally in Ontario, Fruitland, Payette, Vale, any of the Treasure Valley or anyone who's watching from other states, you know who you are.

So we just pray that you're there with, that you're here with us and you're there with them. You are the sovereign God. And we just pray that we can learn to love like you.

First and foremost, may we make a decision for you, believe in you and grow in you and do good in your holy name, for it is believing in your son that we are saved.

And because of this salvation, we're called to be more like you. So we just ask that you're there with us, here with us today this morning. It is in Jesus' holy name and we all say together, amen.

[5 : 58] And I wanna open up with this question that I want you to really think about. Feel free to comment in the comments below. I'll try to monitor it as best as possible. Is the question of can you think of a time where you felt loved and supported by your family?

Or maybe you felt loved and supported by your church. Maybe you felt that love and support from your community. How did that love and support?

How did that have an impact on you? So I want you to take a moment and feel free to comment down below and just really reflect on that. That's just something that's very powerful.

So I'm gonna give a moment and feel free to answer that question in the comments. Okay. So feel free to keep that answer or that experience that you've had in mind as we go forth in this message today.

Think of those experiences, those moments in your time where you felt love from your family, you felt love from your church, or your congregation, or wherever you have been.

[7 : 21] A moment where you felt supported. You know, this last week, I was talking about, in last week's sermon, I was talking about the idea of the empty chair.

And the empty chair is a way that we can think of the, of who we are as a congregation, but who we can reach out to. When we invite people to come to church, or we invite people to come experience the love of Christ, I want you to think about that as we go through our sermon series and just moving forward, is the idea of the empty chair.

Who can you invite? Who can you share in the love of Christ with that unknown? I got this idea originally from Jeff Bezos. He had a similar idea for Amazon, but it's really, we can use that similar framework for how we invite people, right?

We have to ask people to come and see what we are all about. That Jesus is Lord, that he is the light, the life and the truth.

And we're just really, that's just really a way for us to celebrate and also a way for us to invite. I wanna share a story with you that has really impacted my life.

[8 : 40] And I hope that this story will impact your life. I remember a time in my life where having a church family was very good for me.

You know, there was a time in my life where I was trying to discover who I was. I was at this point in my life where I really didn't know, there was just some things that I was wrestling with and I needed some healing.

I needed some clarification and I just needed, there were some issues that I just needed to work out. And I wasn't really finding the answers that I was looking for. It was something that was quite a struggle to say the least.

And I found a church that really took me in. A church that loved me and helped me grow in my faith in Christ. It was this journey that I was embarking on from being a new believer in Christ to one who

learns, who's interested in scripture, one who learned more about the word of God and one who began this process of being more Christ-like.

And this experience that I had in this church, it really helped me in my journey in Christ. You know, you'd be amazed at how much your life can have a profound impact on other.

[10:01] By you being present, by you being there for someone and opening the word of God and showing that Jesus loves you or showing the truth of scripture, maybe you being a listening ear to someone has made a profound impact even though you didn't know what words to say.

I know sometimes when someone is down and I wanna be there for them, sometimes I don't know what words to say. But I have found so often that just by being present with someone and just being that shoulder for them to cry on or just listening to someone, that has a very profound impact.

And I think of so much of how us, how the church is really a reflection of God's love. And I want you to think of the times where you were impacted in your own spiritual journey.

For each and every one of us were on this spiritual walk and this is what I like to tell people. If you don't know who Jesus Christ is, your spiritual journey should be to come to know who Jesus Christ is.

And if you believe in the Lord and you have been saved, then your journey should be becoming more Christ-like. And it is becoming more holy, so to speak, and allowing God to work in and through your life.

[11:21] To be loved and to be supported is something that we find from God, knowing that God loves us, but also in the sense of community that exists in the church.

And with all that being said, I'd like to read scripture, our first scripture reading, which is found in Deuteronomy chapter six, verses five through seven. And it says here, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

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.

So that's from Deuteronomy chapter six, verses five through seven. These verses, they remind us, it's a reminder. It's an instruction from God to love Him with everything that we are.

Do you love the Lord with everything you are, with your mind, your body and your spirit? This verse goes on to teach us the importance of what it means to teach this love that we have for God and knowing that God loved us to the next generation, specifically to our children, right?

[12:42] Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might, right? That's, some of us know these words very well. And with these words, it shall be on your heart. Very good.

You shall teach them diligently to your children and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way. So there's this sense of having this teaching with children and how important it is.

So it's focusing on the next generation. And I want you to think of how important it is for us to teach the next generation, to empower the next generation, to share in the love of Christ with the next generation of children, with biblical truth and that love of Christ.

And I want you to ask yourself this question. How can we incorporate the love that we have for God into our own lives, right? With our children, with our family and with our community.

When we receive this love from Jesus Christ, we're called to share in this love and we're not called to hold onto it and not share it but rather to share it with others.

[13:54] And like I said, I know that for many of us there's this verse that's quoted from Jesus. When Matthew is, excuse me, in the gospel of Matthew, when Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees, he is quoting the Shema, right?

He's speaking to the Pharisees, saying, yes, you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart. Well, that's the verse that it comes from. So it's part of what's known as the Shema.

It's a prayer that God's people used to pray. And you'll find in your notes, if you have them, that Deuteronomy 4 through 9 is a prayer that the Jewish people would pray two times a day.

And I'd like to kind of expand more on this. I want you to think of how some people, they pray when they get up in the morning or they pray when they do their, what is it, their evening prayers before they go to bed.

Some of us pray before every meal. Some of us pray in the car and we have certain habits that we exhibit when we're going about our day to day. Well, the Shema was an affirmation of faith.

[15:02] It was a prayer that was repeated by God's people. These words were, they were spoken as a commitment to God and living out their faith. That's absolutely wonderful.

It was a declaration for their love to God. And it was a reminder that God loved them as well. It was more than just words. It was about living out their faith.

It was personal devotion to God. And we think of a modern day equivalent. Well, what would that look like? A modern day equivalent, like I'm saying, would be praying two times a day, right?

When you get up or when you go to sleep or when you're reading the word of God, that would be a wonderful equivalent. Or praying about your thankfulness to God or maybe the commitment that you have to the truth of scripture and living out being Christ-like in your everyday life.

So there's just many ways that we can think of an example of this. Now, this is not something you have to do, but this is certainly a way that the Jewish people, that God's chosen people, they dedicated their lives to the Lord.

[16:07] And certainly this is just one way that us as Christians or that we can connect with the Lord. So think for a moment, how do you connect to the Lord?

Is it by praying when you get up in the morning or before you go to bed? Maybe you can answer in the question if you feel led to. It's just something to think about. Some of us, we may have the discipline of praying at certain times and maybe some of us don't.

Let this be an encouragement for you of how you can connect to God and his divine plan for your life. And God calls us to love him with everything that we are.

He calls for us, just like we're reading in Deuteronomy, to teach this type of love with our children.

That wording that I've been highlighting is to teach them diligently, well, to teach who?

To teach the children diligently. It highlights the important of not just teaching children as a one-time occurrence, but something that is continuous.

[17:13] This is much like how in the Christian world, we have this word called discipleship, right? Discipleship, much like teaching them diligently, is not a one-time thing.

It's an ongoing journey for us to be more Christ-like. Like I'm saying, for those of you who don't know the Lord, may you be on a path to know who God is, to know who Jesus Christ is.

And from knowing who Jesus is, may you be on a path of this ongoing process of living more like Jesus and knowing the truth of God's word.

It's also, we also think of the idea of sanctification, where salvation is one and done, that Jesus paid it all, and when you believe in the Lord, you shall be saved, and upon that salvation, no one can snatch you from the hand of God.

Sanctification, though, is this idea of ongoing, that you will become more Christ-like. So these are just some words and some ideas that you can think of when we're thinking of teaching children diligently.

[18:20] And may you be on a path to come to know the Lord, and knowing the Lord, may you be on a path of growing in the Lord. This journey is absolutely powerful.

The journey to come to know who the Lord is and saying, wow, Jesus is this cool guy, and then seeing that he died on the cross, that he was born in the manger, that he performed many miracles, that he taught wonderful parables, that he performed these miracles, the ability to turn water into wine, walking on water, healing the sick, raising people from the dead, and then learning about how Christ died for our sins on the cross, that he died so that we could have everlasting life by believing in him, and knowing that on the third day he rose again, this is the gospel story, and it's so powerful, it's so important for us to know this, but also for the next generation to know this.

And it makes me think of how important family should teach children, but also us as the church, as the body of Christ should do the same.

We as the local church, as the body of Christ, we should see to it that we teach our children the truth of Scripture and the love of Jesus Christ.

And how we do this is by us intentionally focusing, going all in about the children. They are the next generation, and setting up an environment where we can be able to let them have fun, let them be children, but also to teach them and see that Jesus loves them.

[20:03] I'm always reminded, I had a conversation with someone today just about the fundamental, that Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

It's just a core truth of who Jesus Christ is. We should teach our children about the gospel story and the love that God has for us. And in teaching, and I want you to keep this in mind, it is in teaching children, it is in letting them experience, like I said, fun, and learning about who God is, that they will have the knowledge of who Jesus Christ is.

And through knowledge comes faith. And I am convinced that just as the Jewish people were commanded to do this in the context of family, of course we should do this in our own family context, but also in the church body context.

Children are the future of Christianity. And it is important for us to focus on providing that safe environment for children to, like I said, have fun, but also be exposed to who Jesus is.

And we do that through family and through the church. It is a great encouragement that we focus on the next generation. And I want us to turn to our second scripture verse, which is found in 1st John.

[21 : 25] It's gonna be on 1st John chapter four, verses seven through 12. And it's titled, God is Love. It goes like this, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God.

And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world that we might live through him.

In this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

And there's a lot of depth and a lot of richness in this. And John's words are here to tell us that God loves each and every one of us. And because of this love, we should do the same.

[22 : 41] We should love others just as God has loved us. And we can do this by the words that we say and the things that we do. Certainly the criticalness is to believe in the Lord and be saved, right?

Know that God loves you and receive that salvation and upon that salvation, share in the love of that God has for you. We are called to act, to be doers of the word, much like we are hearers of the word.

We are called to show that same type of love with our friends, with our family and the community.

Do you realize that the closer you get to God, the more God will work in and through your life?

Do you realize when you open the pages of scripture and when you're in Christian community, you can see how lives are transformed?

Do you see that the love that God has for us is beyond the human type of love? We're talking about agape love, unconditional love, everlasting love that is just so, it's so powerful and it's for us to learn to exhibit.

[23 : 49] The ability to forgive, the ability to be Christ-like. It's just so powerful. And ask yourself this question, who can you share in the love of Christ with?

And I want you to reflect on these two verses in scripture, reflect on the powerful words of scripture and think about our mission and vision here at Ontario Community Church.

It is critical that we encourage people to believe in the Lord and to be saved, but also to be encouraged to be a part of the church, to be a Christian and to grow in their faith.

We focus on equipping so that believers can learn from the word of God and what it means to be a Christian. And we engage the community for Christ to the sharing of God's word, the good news, our testimony, but also through service.

I want you to think about how we are planning to incorporate these community classes for children and how we are going to love Ontario. These are two things that we're going to be focused on in the next few weeks.

[25 : 03] Like I mentioned in the announcements, we definitely need help if we're going to create these community classes for children at 9 a.m. before our service and really just, let's spread the word to the community that, hey, here is an opportunity for children to learn a life skill and do it in the context of God's love.

And at the conclusion of that, we invite those children and those families to come and experience God's love in our church service. It's so powerful for us.

And I also talked about ways that we can love our city to love Ontario. It's so important for us as the church to exhibit the love of Christ and to be that beacon of hope, right?

Jesus Christ is the light of the world and that light shines through us. Why wouldn't we want to be present in the community, active in the community, sharing in that love and that light of Christ with others?

These are initiatives for us to focus on teaching children, to teach them diligently, but to focus on the family unit as a whole. It is about teaching people about the love of Christ and that there is salvation and that there is new life and that there is truth that comes from God.

[26 : 25] We are made with great purpose. We're made with great potential and we have the chance to share in that salvation, the good news of the gospel with other people.

We have a unique opportunity to cultivate love, to love families and share in our faith in Christ with others. These are so important.

And I speak of exhibiting love to the next generation and seeing to it that this next generation grows up in knowing who God is and the truth of the word.

Can you imagine the profound impact that you can have on the next generation? Do you realize that by investing in children and having them grow in the Lord that you will see for yourself lives transformed by the gospel?

It's something that is needed. It's needed now more than ever. Certainly I'm talking in the context of Ontario, but I also want you to think of other cities as well.

[27 : 30] Cities that need the word of God and coming back to our city to Ontario, when I read about young people who are fighting or they're shooting each other or they're being violent with one another, I think to myself that there is a better way for these young people to come to know who the Lord is.

There's a better way. And I want us to take time today throughout this week to reflect on what it means to you to cultivate love for families and for the community.

We are exhibiting that love of Christ to others. We are called to love God and to love people as that Matthew passage says in Matthew 22 verse 37.

We're called to invest in the next generation of people, our own children. Do you remember when you were a child? Do you remember when people invested in you?

And it may be if you didn't come to know the Lord as a child, do you remember the people that had a profound impact in your walk with the Lord and you coming to know who Jesus is?

[28 : 38] Certainly there had to have been people that worked with you and helped you along the journey. We're doing the same thing by passing the torch, so to speak, by focusing on them.

It is so important. We're called to intentionally love our community. Let us embrace this call to focus on families and our community, to focus on the future.

Let us be active in our faith and be doers of the word and not just hearers. And be encouraged to love others just as God loves you and how God loves us.

Because of this love, we should exhibit and show that same kind of love to others. And I wanna remind everyone in all of these initiatives, the most important thing is believing in the Lord first and foremost.

Believe in the Lord and be saved. And in belief, you will be born again. I'm reminded of John 3.16, which many of you know this verse that says that God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whosoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life.

[29 : 52] And that verse speaks of everybody. It speaks of all people, right? Not just a select group, but everybody. And that is the core.

That is the critical component of Christianity. Believe in the Lord and be saved. I'm also reminded of John 14 verses 34 through 35, where Jesus mentions the new commandment that you love one another just as he loved us, we are called to love one another.

By this, I love that verse 35, by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. And we see in these verses from 1 John and the John passages that God is love. This is a profound statement because love is just one of the major attributes of who God is. God is love, but there's other words that describe who God is.

God is the great I am. He is eternal, he is infinite. He is self-existent, he is holy. He is great, he is good. God is merciful, he is faithful.

[31 : 04] He's gracious and compassionate and forgiving. And our God, like I said, he's holy and the fact that he knows each and every one of us and loves us and gives us the ability to believe in him is simply remarkable.

I bring up these many verses to show how important it is to cultivate love here in this church and here in this community.

Us as Christians, we are to share in the love of Christ with others. Let us consider focusing on that next generation. Let us be encouraged to teach children about Jesus, that the love that he has for them, certainly how they can grow up to know the Lord.

The Deuteronomy passage explains the importance of ongoing teaching for children and more thinking about creating these community classes for children, consider that these are our efforts to teach them diligently.

Through learning life skills based on Christian principles, we are exposing them to have fun, but also to learn and grow and to know who Jesus Christ is.

[32 : 16] Both of these verses are a call for us to cultivate love. As a church, we should extend the invitation to our neighbors and to other families and of course, people within the community.

We are focusing on cultivating love with our children, with our family and with the community. This is a reflection of what we are learning today. It is all about us being active in our faith.

How can you be active in your faith? As our closing question, wanna ask you, how can we as the body of Christ, cultivate love with our families and to our community?

I want you to think about this. Take this to heart as we go into this week. And with that, I'd like for us to close in prayer.

And Father, as we conclude our time today, we thank you for providing us the truth of your word and that love that comes from you. We ask that you remain in us and that your word dwells richly within us.

[33 : 26] We pray for strength and wisdom to be able to cultivate love in this church and to be Christ-like in the community. We ask that you lead and that you guide us to be a church that extends an invitation to those in the community and that a church that cares for families, especially children, may we teach them diligently.

Guide us to know the truth and that the truth will set us free. And let us be active in our faith and having you at the center of our lives.

Let us consider that empty chair and help guide us in answering the question, who can sit in that empty chair? Let us love our neighbors.

Teach us to live and to love like you. Be with us as we go from this place and word. And indeed, it is in Jesus' name that we pray and we all say together, amen.

Thank you for tuning in to the Ontario Community Church sermon podcast. For more about our church and how you can get involved or support our mission, please visit ontariocommunitychurch.org.

[34 : 41] May God's blessings be with you.