

Time of Grace Ministry  
**He Cares; We Care: About Children**  
September 16, 2012  
Deuteronomy 4:1-14

So tell me, do you know people who homeschool their children? I guess I didn't used to think there were all that many homeschooled kids in America, but I keep running into them. People will tell me, "Yeah, I was homeschooled." Or I run into parents, people my age or a little younger, who will say, "Yeah, we homeschool our kids."

In America, if you look around a little bit, you can find some estimates that over one million children a year are being homeschooled in the United States. It seems that countries that have a tradition of trusting their citizens will also trust them to homeschool their children. In totalitarian countries, which thrive on total control, they use public schooling and mandatory public schooling, as an instrument of state inculcation of their values and their kind of propaganda. But in the countries that come from Great Britain, which were its former colonies – like Canada, South Africa, and the United States – you will find a really huge homeschool movement. South Africa, believe it or not, has a huge homeschool movement. And I'd like to think with you a little bit about the value of homeschooling.

We still need schools. In fact, all ways of discipling children are important and valuable, and this day we celebrate the fact that not only does our God care for children, but he invites us – and even challenges, even commands us – to care as much as he does.

Today is the beginning of a new message series that I'll be bringing you, as we dig into the book of Deuteronomy, and I'm calling it, "He Cares; We Care." And number one is about the little ones; about children.

Would you open up your Bible with me to Deuteronomy 4, and I'd like to read to you and savor with you and dig into one paragraph from the farewell address of a man who knew he was dying. Not dying of disease; dying because God had said, "Your funeral is going to be in about two weeks."

As far as we can tell from the way the Bible describes Moses' life, he was vigorous and healthy and go, go, go, go, go – and then dead. And it wasn't that he had a heart attack or stroke – God just had decided, "This is the last day of your life. Now you're coming home with me."

How old was Moses when he died? Who knows? I'll wait. Nobody knows? Aren't you glad you came today? He was one hundred and twenty – wow! And he didn't grow feeble; he didn't "geezer in," like I'm already halfway there. He didn't slowly just kind of coast in. He was vigorous until the last! Moses was one hundred and twenty, and his life was cut into three pieces by two violent interventions.

It's just kind of crazy – God has this thing about the number forty. I have to talk to him when we get to heaven. One of my curious things: "What is it with the number forty?" But if you look up in a Bible concordance the word "forty," it pops up in about twenty or thirty different Bible

stories; like, “What is the deal with forty?” I think – if I may dare to put words in God’s mouth for him; this is just a hypothesis – that God thought of that as one lifecycle; like a generation. And he picked a round number and he used it over and over again. Like Jonah – how many days did the people of Nineveh have to repent? Forty. Moses’ life, one hundred and twenty, was divided into three self-contained segments of forty years.

Segment one, act one – pampered, spoiled, highly educated, brought up in the royal court of the Egyptians. Adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter, grew up the easy life; Moses was living the dream. But then he decided unilaterally to start the revolution, and he killed an Egyptian and had to flee.

Act two – poverty stricken shepherd boy, scrounging for an existence, needing an adoptive family just to survive. Criminal on the lam, murderer with a price on his head, and had to flee to the east and hide out in the desert and basically take up the life of a nomadic shepherd.

Act three – God finds him when he’s ready. God made him wait until he was eighty before he was useful, and God said, “Now I think I can use you. I think those forty years in the desert have prepped you for what I need you for.” And he was the leader of the people of Israel in the great Exodus. And then back in the desert he goes! He must have had skin like leather. For forty years, because of the hardness of their hearts, the people of Israel either stalled – when God said, “Sit,” they sat and camped out; he (God) sent them manna. Obviously, without the manna, they would have never survived in the Sinai Desert. It’s a waterless, treeless, foodless place. You can barely survive. But two or three or four million people – no way they could have survived unless God simply dropped food out of heaven, which he did for four decades.

Now God had told Moses, “I have good news and bad news; which do you want first?” And Moses said, “Well, you better give me the bad news first.” And God said, “Because of the way you blew me off when I had an important message, and you disrespected me and contradicted me and disobeyed me, you are not going to walk into the Land of Canaan.” And Moses said, “Well, what’s the good news?” And God said, “You have two pieces of good news! I’m going to let you see it from Mount Nebo. And the second piece of good news is soon you’ll be in heaven and you won’t care.”

Moses thought, “Oh, I didn’t know I was sick; I didn’t know I was elderly.” Anyway, at God’s prompting, he had to unload some instruction for these people because they were capable at any time of unraveling spiritually; they were always at risk. And remember this: The entire generation of adult Israelites had died off in the desert because of contempt that they showed to the Word of the Lord. God said, “Okay, you don’t want the Promise Land I’m going to give you? Alright, you don’t have to have it. I’ll give it to your children instead.” Do you know every adult – everybody over the age of twenty (except for Joshua and Caleb, who were two of the twelve spies, and the only two to give a good report) – died in the desert, and God waited until they were all gone before he allowed them to move on?

Deuteronomy – Moses’ farewell – four big farewell speeches were spoken to a very young audience. Oldest was forty! Average age would have been about twenty! Half of these were kids – grade school kids and teenagers sitting there and listening. Now obviously, all two or three million of them couldn’t have heard Moses voice without electronic amplification, so he

must have had an inner-ring that could hear his voice and then the Levites were writing all this stuff down frantically to keep up, and then they would re-teach it; and so it worked its way through the nation – I’m sure (this is how I think it happened) – through the priests and Levites to get to everybody. But this is what Moses needed them to know. They were too young to have remembered slavery from personal experience; they (those stories) were only tales from their parents and grandparents. They did not witness the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. But I’ll tell you what they had experienced – this wandering nation had survived not one, two, or three; not four, not five, not six; but at least seven military assaults! These ex-slaves had somehow managed to arm themselves and to fight full-tilt military battles of assaults that they had received of people who would not let them pass. They (the Israelites) never initiated them; they were attacked. Seven victories! So they had already begun to see the arm of the Lord at work.

Very soon they were going to cross the Jordan River on dry land, and these people were going to see the walls of Jericho fall over in front of trumpet blasts from the Lord. But Moses was very nervous about their understanding, and he had – the book of Deuteronomy is crazy – it’s a little hazy to me how on earth this name... it’s a Greek word; actually two Greek words. “Deutero” means “second,” and “nomos” means “law.” It’s not even a good nickname, “the second law,” because it’s nothing new. Moses is basically re-teaching the covenant to people who were too young to have gotten it the first time. And in Hebrew – this book begins, “These are the words that Moses spoke.” So what’s the nickname of this book? In the Hebrew Bible it’s just called, “The words” – Moses’ words – so I’d like to just look at a few on this special education Sunday, Christian Education Sunday, at a paragraph in chapter four.

Chapter 4 begins: “Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you.” Why? “Follow them so that you may live.” In other words, this is not just a little cultural transmission, like, “I’m going to teach you how we Israelites care for animals,” or, “I’m going to teach you some of our songs.” Or, “I’m going to pass on some of our national history and trivia,” and things like that, or, “Help you know some of the recipes for some of our favorite national dishes.” This is life or death. What you do with the open arms of the Lord your God will determine how happy a life you have on this earth and will determine what becomes of you in the great Judgment. This is urgent business. “Listen! Hear, Israel!”

Now slide your eyes – there’s a whole lot of this stuff. You’ll enjoy reading Deuteronomy; it’s very clear, it’s not hard-going at all, it’s fascinating reading. Let’s just pick up one paragraph and slide down to verse 9: “Be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen” – those seven military victories that God had given. “Or let them slip from your heart as long as you live.” Satan, your enemy, will try to steal your confidence, your covenant, your relationship with your God from you. Don’t let him! Resist, take inventory of your treasures, and make your relationship with God your number one (priority).

“Teach them to your children and to their children after them.” I commission all of you to become homeschoolers. Your children may never pick this up on their own. You must make it your business to transmit your faith. Now, you cannot believe for your children, but you can tell them the truth. You cannot turn them from unbelievers into believers; only God can do that. But

you can tell them the truth. You cannot guarantee how their lives will turn out, but you can set them up for success by telling them things that they do not know by nature. And he reminds them now of the time at Mount Sinai when God had gathered the nation around. These kids, by now, could not remember that so he had to kind of re-tell them.

“Remember the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb...” That’s another word for Mount Sinai, where the Ten Commandments were given. “When he said to me, ‘Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.’” There’s that transmission thing again.

“You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments...” – the summary of it. That wasn’t, of course, the totality of it; that was just the executive summary “...which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets.”

As far as I can tell, that was the first instance in human history of the words of God written down. Before that, transmission of God’s Word was oral. Now the great age of writing of God’s words had begun and God did it himself, autographing his ten words for them on two flat pieces of stone. “The Lord directed me at that time to teach you the decrees and laws you are to follow.” That was a terrifying event; I’m glad I was not there. You probably should be glad you weren’t there. You might think, “How cool! It would have been fun to see Moses come down with the Ten Commandments.” You wouldn’t have enjoyed the experience. The earth shook even worse than the earthquake that shook America this last summer. Trumpets blasted so loud that the people clapped their hands over their ears. When they heard God speak it was not the soothing voice of their Daddy; it was the powerful, majestic, booming voice of the Creator of the universe who holds all things accountable to his will. They clapped their hands over their ears and said, “Make him stop. We can’t bear it any longer.” Thick black clouds roiled around. This was not “the hills are alive with the sound of music” – this was, “Oh God, we’re going to die.”

And God had several things to impress upon them. Number one: “You are sinful and by the way you’re born, you’re cut off from me, and some bridging has to happen and you are incapable of doing it yourself. If you step close to me...” – what would happen to people who stepped on the Holy Mountain at that point? Do you know your Bible story? “I will come to you. You cannot come to me.” But he then followed to lay out the sacrificial system, by which an innocent victim could be slain and the individual believer be forgiven of his or her guilt and could approach God.

But the second message at Sinai that is sometimes overlooked is the prologue, and here’s what God said. When Moses was called up to the mountain, he was allowed to step on it and not be killed. “This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob.” This is from Exodus 19. “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt” on your behalf. I set the slaves free because I love you! “You’ve seen what I did to Egypt, how I carried you on eagle’s wings.” It’s as though I was a giant bird and I took you on my back and I took you out of the burning sulfurous ruin and I carried you to a safe place because I love you. “Out of all nations, you will be my treasured

possession.” Israel, you have value to me; you’re precious. You’re expensive; you’re worth pursuing. I want you in my family. I love you. That’s part of Sinai’s message, as well.

And the reason Moses is going on and on like this – why he keeps saying, “Tell your children,” is the only thing people know about God by birth is what’s placed in their bean; in their conscience. And all your conscience tells you is a vague sense of the rules. You feel generally good about yourself if you think you’re being good, and when you do what is wrong you can’t stop a feeling of guilt coming over you. Your conscience makes you nervous, and we have all kinds of human manmade ways to get rid of a guilty conscience; but only one thing works to take away that guilt permanently and that’s the gospel of our Savior’s forgiveness, which was set up as a demo by the dying animals – the bulls and the sheep and the goats of the sacrificial system – and all their blood was splattered in anticipation of the one-time Lamb of God on his once-for-all cross, when the once-for-all “It is finished” was pronounced and the once-for-all message of God is, “I forgive you for my Son’s sake.”

But nobody knows about the gospel by birth; by instinct; by conscience. Your conscience says nothing about God’s rescue plan. It must be revealed to us by God and it must be communicated by people who know the people who don’t know. It must be handed off; it must be shared. This is true of us sideways; that you and I have a great mission imperative to share the gospel sideways. But today I challenge you, I command you, I exhort you, I beg of you, I call upon you to join with me in doing what Moses invites and challenges us, to re-dedicate ourselves to make sure that the young ones coming up have heard the gospel – for if we don’t tell them, who will? Satan will fill the heads of our youth with nonsense – suicidal nonsense – unless we reveal to them what God has revealed to us. There isn’t a man or woman in this room who would put up with allowing children to fend for themselves in life without ever having to take reading classes and decipher writing. That’s child abuse; we would never allow it. You’re unemployable if you can’t read. We would not allow anybody – from any home educator to any school educator – to allow children to drift through their education without learning how to manage numbers. If you cannot manage numbers you’re unemployable. You cannot function in this world, especially not now where there are no more decent paying jobs for unskilled labor. A strong back does not get you squat anymore, does it? If you do not know how to manage words and numbers you can’t do anything for our society. That’s a given, right? Then why are so many parents contemptuous and neglectful of connecting the gospel that they’ve heard, to their children?

And this day, to all of you – not just to the some of you who homeschool children in the full range – but every one of you with a child, with a niece, a nephew, a grandchild, may you all be homeschoolers so that your children not only know about the anger and judgment of God – the gloom and thunderclaps and earthquakes of Mount Sinai – but they also know of an aching, compassionate love from a Father who has rescued his people in the past and has performed the ultimate rescue on Calvary so that he can put them up on his eagle’s wings and carry them from this dying world to a place of life.

You and I are bearers of life, and the same thing that Moses challenged his hearers back then, I now put before you: death and life. Choose life; follow the covenant of the Lord, so that you may live. And I invite you to join with me in a commitment to invest time, energy, prayer and

your money and your advocacy for all efforts which seek to communicate the gospel – the saving gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, his love and forgiveness – to children.

And if you are willing to invest of yourself in that holy mission with me, then say, “I am!”

I’m thrilled to have the chance to talk to you today and share good news from God’s Word about how much our Savior loves us and especially, how much our Savior Jesus loves children.

I also love having you as my partners. Through your support for Time of Grace on a regular basis, I consider you to be my partners in ministry. If you have never made a contribution to Time of Grace’s ministry, let me ask you today to pray and consider today, right now, to become one of my partners on an ongoing basis and help us share the wonderful message of what Jesus did for all people, especially for children.

I’ve got some great news! My new book is out – it’s called, “Straight Talk; Answers From God’s Word.” And what it is, is it’s a series of questions that viewers and readers have sent to us and asked me about, compelling me to dig into God’s Word and provide answers. I think you might really be interested in seeing what was on people’s minds. I think they’re probably asking questions you’d like to know, as well.

If you’d like your own copy of, “Straight Talk; Answers From God’s Word,” go to our website – it’s on your screen right now – or call us. That phone number is on your screen right now, as well.

I’d also like you to know that if you are interested in receiving short bits of information through Twitter, one hundred and forty-four characters or less, you can find us at [twitter.com/togministry](https://twitter.com/togministry); that’s for all you social media fans.

I’d like to pray with you today as our program concludes. Let’s pray to our Lord about children.

*Lord Jesus, what a thrill it is to see how much you care about children. They need you, too. They’re little sinners, and they need what you have purchased at great cost for them. Help us to help our children who are also your children.*

*You did not want people to keep them away from you; to hinder them. You said to us, “Let the little children come to me.” And we want to do that with your help. Help us care about our children as much as you do, and help us to bring them clearly, in terms that they understand, the greatest message in the world, that you love them now and forever and that there is forgiveness and hope in heaven in you alone. Jesus, we pray in your name, Amen.*

For Time of Grace, I’m Pastor Mark Jeske, reminding you that every day is a day of God’s grace for you.



# Grace Notes

Guides for Personal Bible Study

## He Cares; We Care: About Children

**Deuteronomy 4:9-14:** Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children." You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets. And the LORD directed me at that time to teach you the decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

### Points to Ponder

- **Read Deuteronomy 4:1.** What does this verse tell you about the urgency of Moses' words?
- What is the danger that Moses warns against in the first half of verse 9? Are you absent-minded?
- How many times does Moses command the Israelites to pass God's words and accounts of his deeds on to their children?
- Do the Christian parents you know "home school" their children in God's Word in their homes? Did your parents teach you Bible stories when you were young?
- Why is it so critically important that adults intentionally organize a Bible communication plan for the children in their lives?

### The Bottom Line

The Israelites would soon enter Canaan, and Moses was not allowed to go with them. Before God took him to heaven, God told Moses to instruct the people, to remind them of what God had done for them. He retaught this group of young people the original covenant that God had made with their parents when they came out of Egypt. Moses encouraged the people to remember these things and pass them on to their children—transmitting the faith. In the same way God encourages us to share the gospel message with our children.

You can dig deeper into your Bible by reading more about these truths from the lesson:

- **Trust the Lord:** Psalm 37:5; Psalm 56:4; Proverbs 3:5; John 14:27; Philippians 4:6,7
- **Don't Forget:** Deuteronomy 8:18; 1 Chronicles 16:12; Job 36:24; Psalm 77:11; Proverbs 3:1
- **Tell Your Children:** Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6; Proverbs 23:24; Matthew 19:14; Ephesians 6:4

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