

Transcript

Sermon Title: Discipling Children and Young People wholeheartedly

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There are two readings this morning, both from the book of Deuteronomy. The first is from chapter 6 and the second from chapter 31. So, the first reading, Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4 to 7. 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 on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road,

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when you lie down and when you get up. And the second reading from Deuteronomy 31 verses 9 to 13. So, Moses wrote down this law and gave it to all the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord and to all the elders of Israel. Then Moses commanded them, "At the end of every 7 years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Festival of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before your Lord your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their

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hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and children and the foreigners residing in your towns, so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law must hear it and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing to Jordan to possess. Thanks be to God. So, just get my thing together. Um, Nick kind of preached my sermon for me, which is always a really good confirmation when he hasn't actually

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seen what I'm talking Well, he knows what I'm talking about, but he's not seen my my writing. So, um, yeah, we are continuing our growing together series, which is part of our building our vision to be a Holy Spirit-led church family. And as part of that today we're talking about discipling children and youth. Um, so discipleship is one of those kind of big words, isn't it? Those kind of Christian words. But really, if you simplify it, it's all about becoming more like Jesus

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and following him. Just becoming more like Jesus and following his ways. Uh, it's not about perfection. It's about an open heart to grow with God. So, as we start, I thought we'd wonder together. I wonder hands up if you had a role model growing up. Had a role model, somebody that you looked up to when you were growing up. A few of us? Yeah? Um, now, role models are uh, you know, a lot of us It can even be celebrities, can't it? People that we look up to. As a child, I looked up to my sisters. I'm

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the youngest of three uh, sisters, and I looked up to them. I got their hand-me-downs, which was really nice, and I still do in some ways. Um, and then as a teenager, I looked up to my friends, which often happens with teenagers. They They kind of build their world around their friends. I'm just staring at somebody there. Um and um And then as an adult, actually no, I was going to show you. Uh where is the little clicker thing? Sorry, I'm just getting myself I don't need to point it. There you go.

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So, this is a drawing I did when I was 12. You can see that I should have been in the art career. Um but so I I looked up to my friends when I was 12, but I also looked up to the Queen, to the late Elizabeth the Queen the Second, which um is quite interesting. That's me on the right, looking really cool. And that's the Queen. So, and then as I grew up as an adult, as I became a Christian as well at the age of 16, I started to realize that Jesus is the one that we are called to model our

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lives on. And also, it's still really good, isn't it, to have people to look up to, people that we trust, people who are safe, people that we can look up to. And that for me is a lot about role modeling, uh discipleship. And this call, you might be sitting here this morning, you might be thinking, "Well, I don't have children or young people." You might You might do, you might not. But really, this is an invitation for every single one of us, whether we're parents or grandparents or

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we're not. You know, each and every one of us is invited, I believe by God, to disciple the next generation in some way or another. Each and every one of us, whether we're parents or not. And for me, I'm not a mum yet, as you guys probably know if you know me, but I have lots of children and young people who I have nurturing love for, that God has given me that love. And also, I have lots of people, myself, who are like spiritual fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters to me. Some of them are sitting here today.

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So, we can each and every one is invited to disciple the next generation, no matter where we're at. It's a call call for everybody. And our first passage in Deuteronomy 6 talks about wholehearted living for God, doesn't it? Wholehearted loving God with our whole heart, with our whole strength, with our all our might, with everything we have. And it's actually a really big call, isn't it? It's a massive thing. Loving God with our everything. That's huge. And I don't know about you, but for me

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that can overwhelm me a little bit. I'm like, um how? How do I love God with everything? Like my little trigger of I'm not good enough can always get triggered when I hear that. It can be overwhelming. And if that's you, that's okay. Really, today is about realizing that it's not about perfection, like I said. There's no guilt or condemnation. But it's about opening ourselves to God. Having open hands, open hearts, open heads. And verse 7 in this scripture tells us to impress these commands on

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our children. To impress them on our children and to walk this lifestyle of wholehearted commitment to God as a daily thing. To talk about it when we are walking, when we are talking, to to just live it out in our everyday life. It's not just about a Sunday. It's so much more than that. And I think that when we live this out as our everyday life, I think the children and young people in our circle, whoever they are, I think they get fired up as well. I think they see it. And it sparks something in them.

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Cuz discipleship Here we go. Let's go back. is about role modeling, as Nick picked up a bit as well in our all age talk and our worship for everyone. Discipleship is about role modeling. You know, I've heard it said that children and young people will remember who you are more than even what you say. Who you are more than what you say. What we say is really important. Don't get me wrong. But when it's backed up with who we are, how we live, it's so fruitful, isn't it? It's so fruitful.

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I'm sorry if I'm sounding a bit scratchy there. Um and like I said, it's not about perfection. So let's enter this together. Let's open our hearts and let's see where God leads us this morning. So, consistency and love I think is something that I was reflecting on when I was preparing. You know, children and young people, it really is about consistency with them and love. So, it's important that what we say is backed up by how we act. For example, I'm just Here we go.

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Um For example, if we say that we welcome all ages, which we do, but sometimes we struggle and we don't actually act like that. I'm including myself in this. Like, I'm This is again, this is not a accusation. This is really in general. They can get confused because we can say one thing, but actually we don't always act like it. So, really love and consistency is are so important. Okay. So, as we begin, as we look at this discipleship of children and young people, let's start with ourselves.

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Where are we at? Are our hands open to God? Are our heads open to God? Are our hearts open to God? Because I don't think that we can desire for them to be open to God if we are not open to God. It has to start with us. Are you with me? >> Yeah. >> Yes, awesome. I'm glad. Okay. And as I was preparing, I felt a nudge that perhaps for some of us here, childhood has been a difficult thing. And I felt that maybe for some people here, there is an invitation perhaps from God to open up your heart.

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And if you're carrying today some unresolved pain or trauma from your childhood, that maybe God is inviting you to deal with that with him. I've personally experienced that God heals our emotional wounds. The Bible says, doesn't it, that he heals the broken hearts, that that he binds up our wounds. And if that's you today, if you're carrying that pain, that trauma from childhood, maybe God is inviting you to deal with it and to talk to somebody safe. You can receive prayer today as well.

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Okay. So, all age discipleship is biblical. So, in our passage in Deuteronomy 31, it talks about all ages gathering together, doesn't it? And it's a really beautiful passage. And when I spoke about my vision for the kids work, I'm the kids and families worker at this church, if you don't know. When I spoke about my vision back in January, I believe it was, what I feel like God is calling us to do for with our children and families, I felt like I feel like God is saying that he wants us to raise up mighty oaks of

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righteousness in him. And as part of that, we do that through loving children and families, through reaching out in our town, and through discipling holistically with heads, hands, and hearts. And so today we are looking at this holistic discipleship. So, questions is how we're going to approach this. Nick mentioned earlier that we can ask God questions, and that's exactly what we're going to do. We're going to think about what questions children and young people are asking because I believe they are asking lots

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of questions. And I love part of my work when children and young people ask me questions or ask the team. It's the best when they are show that curiosity and that wonder. And so we're going to think about some of the questions that they might be asking in each of these three areas, heads, hands, and hearts. So, let's begin with heads. That's my little drawing that I did. Let's go. Head. Okay. So, for this area of becoming more like Jesus through our heads, really represents God's word,

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the Bible. To simplify it. And I believe that God is um sorry, I believe that children and young people are asking these questions about the Bible. Is it real? Is it relevant? And how do I see it applied in my day-to-day life? How do I see it role modeled in my day-to-day life? So, in Deuteronomy chapter 31 that Chris read, the second passage, we read about the public reading of the law. Now, Moses wrote down the law that God gave. And he passed it to uh the priests who carried the ark of the covenant. And he

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also gave it to the leaders of Israel as well. And he told them to read the law publicly uh every 7 years. So, note that bit, every 7 years. We're going to pick up on that in a moment. So, at the end of every 7 years, during the Festival of Tabernacle, the Tabernacles, and then he told them who to gather during this public reading. To gather the men, the women, the children, and the foreigners living in their towns. So, you can hear that kind of all age um culture there. And also, he told Moses told them why to

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do this as well. He said that they may listen and learn to fear God. This is very similar to Deuteronomy 6, where it um he talks about impressing these commands on our children. So, this is about all age discipleship. Now, imagine the hustle and bustle of these meetings. It must have been very noisy cuz you have all ages gathering together. And it's a really beautiful picture. I love it. And I And I think it would be great to look at three different things that I think this passage is bringing out

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talking about discipleship. So, first of all is change. Where are my Yes, change. So, we mentioned every 7 years. Then, differences. All the different people that were there. And growing together. Now, change. During this public reading of the law, it was to happen every 7 years. I wonder what your life was like 7 years ago. Don't know if you can remember that. You know, life changes every 7 years. It's It's pretty logical. Um so, things would have changed in these 7 years. People would have got older.

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There would have been new children born. There would have been, you know, all sorts of changes. So, change. Change is an important part, I think, that we need to be open to, keep our minds open because change comes with growth. And it's part of discipleship, becoming like Jesus. Change. We need to be open to change. Then, differences. We read that Moses is very specific about who is to gather. Men, women, children, and the foreigners. This is open to everybody. There's nobody to be excluded here.

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This is all age culture and with that it would have come an element of noise and interruptions and feeling uncomfortable. You know, that's what difference does, doesn't it? It can It can lead to that. But God still chose it that way. God still chose it that way. Differences don't have to divide us. They are a great opportunity to build us up, to unite us, to enrich us. They are beautiful thing and I think they really represent the heart of God. And then thirdly, what we see in this passage is growing together.

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God is to grow all ages together. You know, the young learning from the old, the old learning from the young. Growing together as all age family. We see that in this passage. It tells us why this is to happen so that the children may learn to grow with God and that all of us can grow and become more like Jesus. That's discipleship. And that's all in the context under the umbrella of the Bible, what they called the law. That heads discipleship. So we are becoming more like God through his word, through change,

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through differences and by growing together. Still with me? >> Yeah. >> Good. Okay. So, this question these questions that I mentioned earlier that children and young people are asking is the Bible real? Is the Bible relevant? Where do I see it role modeled in my life? I believe that when we teach them the word of God and we then display that they start to see it. So, for example, if we teach them and we do that God is love like the Bible tells us God is love. And then we consistently

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whilst being imperfect, God's bigger God's grace is bigger than that, but we consistently show them that love through kindness, through encouragement if we do that, then they start to see the Bible in their everyday lives. So, we actually live out the message of the Bible. We role model it to them in how we act and we teach it to them. Okay, we're going to move on to hearts experiencing God, experiencing God through the Holy Spirit. Now, when Nathan and I Nathan's my husband we went to Spring Harvest last

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year. We go every year. We love it there. And last year we served on the children's team. So, it was the 5s to 11s and um we saw God meet with the children in such beautiful ways through his spirit. I think of one evening when there was an appeal. There was a like a gospel message and then they invited the children to come up and to respond to it. And there was one particular lad who was about 9 years old who um somebody asked Nathan to pray for him because he had responded. So, Nathan was really tired. They were

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long days, and he just simply prayed, "Come, Holy Spirit." And this lad, 9-year-old lad, met with God in such a beautiful, powerful, tangible way. This is a 9-year-old child. You know, what I want to say today is that there is absolutely no limit for God. There is no junior Holy Spirit. Every single one of us can meet with God. And I believe that children and young people are asking these questions about hearts. They're asking, "How do I meet with God? Where do I meet with God? When do I meet

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with God?" And really, it's so simple. It's about inviting God. God wants to meet with everyone of us. He's given us the Holy Spirit. And all we have to do is say, "Yes. Come, Holy Spirit." Come, Holy Spirit. And we can meet with God on a Sunday, on a Monday, and all throughout. There is literally no limit. You can meet with God anywhere, anywhere. There is no limit. You know, I want to ask you a question that's between you and God. When was the last time that you met with God?

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And experienced His presence. You know, it doesn't have to be a powerful moment like it was for that 9-year-old lad. It can be a really quiet, simple moment. It can be in the middle of the mundane, in the ordinary. But the reason why I'm asking you is because, like we've talked about, discipling children and young people you know, we role model this to them. We Our relationship with God is like the root of how we disciple others. Our relationship with God is the root of how we disciple others.

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In Romans 12:1-2 in The Message says, "Here's what I want you to do, God helping you. Take your everyday, ordinary life, your sleeping, your going to work, your eating, and walking around life and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him." God wants to meet with us. And even today there is that opportunity. We're going to have a little bit of quiet time at the end of this and you know, if you are desiring to meet with

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God, just just say, "Come, Holy Spirit." He's given us the Holy Spirit. Okay. Hands. Now, growing to be more like Jesus through our hands. I believe children and young people are asking, "What is my purpose?" That's massive for them. "What is my purpose? And how do I play my part in this big, scary world?" There is a charity called Children Changing Nations, and it's under the umbrella of PowerPack. I don't know if you've heard of PowerPack. They're a

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Christian uh kind of charity who lead children's work. And Children Changing Nations work with parents and carers to enable children to serve our nation. And what they would do, they would do things like go into Westminster and praying for our nation, praying for our government, going out on the streets and praying for people. And you know, children and young people are so empowered when they serve. They are so empowered when they serve. They learn to be more like Jesus through serving, and that's how we learn, don't

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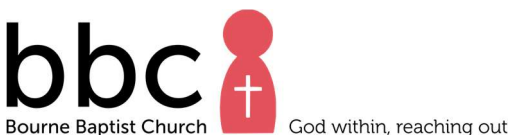
we? I don't know if you've ever heard a child pray, but it's When they pray from their heart, it is just wonderful. It is just wonderful. You know, it's so simple and faith-filled because they they they they depend, they trust. And we can learn that from them. Children can be great preachers. Children can serve. They are an example to us of humble service. Of serving not to gain, but just because they want to. And they carry they carry the presence of God. When they believe in Jesus, they carry

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the presence of God just as much as any of us. And I couldn't speak today without mentioning Paul Davies. You know, Paul has become like a father figure to Nathan and I. And we've missed him so much. So much. And I've I've watched Paul the last few years. I've watched him do this. This is him. This message is him discipling you know, young people. Discipling me and Nathan through just being there. Through just showing up again and again. Through loving, through encouraging, through empowering, through putting them

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before him. You know, this discipling becoming more like Jesus. It's really about I think opening ourselves up. Opening ourselves up, opening our heads, our minds. Opening our hearts and our hands to God and to each other. And Paul Davies wrote the sermon notes for today. And he wrote this question at the end. He said, "Jesus did prioritize children and young people as the present day church and future leadership. Do we do this? Or do we think they are too young?"



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