

Deuteronomy 6:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Analysis

This verse details the comprehensive and continuous nature of biblical instruction. The verb shanan (שָׁנַן, 'teach diligently') literally means 'to sharpen' or 'whet,' suggesting repetitive, intensive instruction that hones and refines understanding. The scope is total: 'unto thy children' establishes intergenerational responsibility, while the four temporal clauses encompass all of life—'when thou sittest in thine house' (domestic life), 'when thou walkest by the way' (public life and travel), 'when thou liest down' (evening), and 'when thou risest up' (morning). This isn't formal, scheduled religious education alone but informal, continuous conversation integrating faith into every aspect of daily existence. The Hebrew dibbarta bam (דִּבַּרְתָּ בָּם, 'thou shalt talk of them') indicates ongoing dialogue, making God's Word the constant topic of family discourse. This holistic approach prevents faith compartmentalization where religion occupies only scheduled times rather than permeating all of life. The NT continues this pattern, with Paul commanding parents to raise children 'in the training and instruction of the Lord' (Ephesians 6:4).

Historical Context

Ancient Israel lacked formal religious schools (those developed later during the Second Temple period). Religious education occurred primarily in the home, with

parents—especially fathers—responsible for teaching children God's law, history, and covenant obligations. This domestic religious education distinguished Israel from nations where priests monopolized religious knowledge and access to deities. The command created a culture of constant theological conversation, where every activity became an opportunity to reference God's character, commands, and covenant faithfulness. Archaeological evidence shows Israelite homes were simple, with family life centered around common spaces where work, meals, and conversation occurred together. This proximity facilitated the continuous instruction Deuteronomy commands. The practice of discussing Scripture during daily routines continues in Jewish tradition through practices like bedtime Shema recitation and morning prayers.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How can modern families recover the practice of integrating Scripture discussion into everyday activities rather than limiting it to formal devotional times?
2. What does 'teach them diligently' reveal about the effort and intentionality required for effective spiritual formation of children?

Interlinear Text

וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם	לְבָנֶיךָ	וְדִבַּרְתָּ	בָּם
And thou shalt teach them diligently	unto thy children	and shalt talk	H0
H8150	H1121	H1696	
בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ	בְּבֵיתְךָ	וּבְלִכְתְּךָ	בַּדֶּרֶךְ
of them when thou sittest	in thine house	H1980	by the way
H3427	H1004		H1870
וּכְשֶׁכָּבַדְךָ	וּבְקוּמְךָ:		
and when thou liest down	and when thou risest up		
H7901	H6965		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 11:19 (Resurrection): And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Ephesians 6:4 (Parallel theme): And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

1 Peter 3:15 (Parallel theme): But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Deuteronomy 6:2 (Parallel theme): That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

Ephesians 4:29 (Parallel theme): Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Genesis 18:19 (Parallel theme): For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Proverbs 6:22 (Parallel theme): When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

Luke 6:45 (Parallel theme): A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Matthew 12:35 (Parallel theme): A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

Colossians 4:6 (Parallel theme): Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.