



## Mentoring and Energizing Your Family's Spiritual Life



**By Jim Burns, Ph.D.**

I have a sentence on the wall in my office that says, "The purpose of the church is to mentor parents; parents mentor their children and the legacy of faith continues to the next generation." One of the most important roles you have on planet Earth is to energize your family's spiritual life. Not too long ago, my daughter Rebecca was praying with Cathy and I, and she said, "Dear Daddy, I mean dear God..." Cathy leaned over to me and said, "Her God looks like a baldheaded, nerdy guy. In other words, her concept of God looks quite a bit like you." Contrary to what some of us in youth ministry used to think, parents and grandparents set the pace when it comes to leading kids in faith. They don't have to be perfect, but they do need to try and be authentic. Here is a quick quiz: What scripture is the most often quoted scripture in the Bible? John 3:16? Psalm 23? Nope. It's Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (I mentioned this once in a previous article on family-based youth ministry).

Here it is: *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. The commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them 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.*

It's called the "Shema" in Hebrew, and every morning and every night in a Jewish home it is quoted. When Jesus was asked what the most important commandment is, he went directly to a part of the Shema. It would have been one of the first scriptures he memorized as a child. The Shema is a cry for fidelity to God. It's a call for putting God first. And we are instructed as parents and grandparents to impress this on our children. Make it a natural part of our homes and way of life. In many ways, it is mentoring our children at its best.

September 2005