

He was 80 years old when he saw the Nile river turn to blood. He saw the firstborn all the Egyptians die, and he saw his own firstborn saved by the blood of a lamb. He saw the Red Sea split in two and the Israelites walk across on dry ground. He saw God on a mountain and then in a tent. He saw bread come from heaven and water from a rock. He saw his people win battle after battle because the Lord fought for them. He saw 12 spies sneak into the land God had promised to see if it was “a land flowing with milk and honey,” like God promised. It was! But when the spies returned he saw them chicken out. They refused to go into the land because they were scared! So, when Moses was 80 years old, God told him to lead the Israelites through the desert for 40 years and in that time every adult died except for two.

He was 120 years old when he stood in the desert and in a crowd of millions he only saw two of them were even half his age. How do you communicate miracles to millions who were too young to remember? How do you communicate pass down the mercy of God to a generation that hasn't seen it like you have? How do you do Christian education?

She was 5 hours old when I held her. 5 hours old and already, like the rest of us, a little rebel against God. How do you communicate miracles? How do you put the love of Jesus into a child's heart? Baptism for sure! But Jesus commanded us to baptize *and teach* them everything he commanded. So how do you do Christian education? To answer that question, let's spend 15 minutes in the desert with Moses. Let's Christian education God's way.

Moses tell us step one of Christian education. There's an implied “is” in verse 4. **⁴Hear, O Israel: Jewish people would say Yahweh is our God, the Yahweh is one.** The people North of the Israelites worshiped Molech. The people across the river worshiped Baal. The people surrounding them worshiped Chemosh. If you wanted those gods to bless you, you had to sacrifice. If you made them mad, they would kill you. If you were in a deep trouble, you would kill your son on their altar. But none of those gods are real. Yahweh is God, and his name means: **“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”** Yahweh is the God of forgiveness and justice. You can't educate anyone about God unless you know who he is. Thank goodness, Yahweh is God!

Step two of Christian education is to live like Yahweh is God. **⁵Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.** Your God forgives! Love him with all you've got! **⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be** just in a book -no- only in church -no- **on your hearts.** Put God's words in your heart.

Step three is the part we always think about. God doesn't say we should mention his word or teach his word. He doesn't. **⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** **⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.** **⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.** Those are Hebrew idioms for making God's word part of everything you do and every thought you think and putting it on your door so that everyone knows in this house, we worship Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God!

That's God's steps to Christian education. 1) Know that Yahweh is God. 2) Put his words in your own heart. 3) Impress his words on children by making him part of everything you do and say and are.

So how are we doing with those three steps? The first things that come to mind are what we do in this building. Our education opportunities here are amazing blessings! At Mount Olive school, every subject is taught with God's word in mind. Discipline is based on God's word. The students and teachers hear God's word in daily devotions and weekly chapels. We have amazing teachers, leaders, volunteers and students in our school, and today we celebrate that! Our Sunday school teaches the true story of how Yahweh has kept all his promises by sending Jesus his Son! We have amazing volunteer teachers and aids. We have people in Bible class on Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. We have Life Groups connecting people to each other and God's word. And all these efforts are paying off. In 2018 the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod published a study on nationwide young adults in the church and found that if a child is enrolled in a Lutheran school or active in youth ministry, they are more likely to be connected to their church.¹ Today we celebrate that.

But did you happen to catch what God said in verse 7? He said, **“Talk about [God's words] when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, and when you lie down and when you get up.”** If you're counting on me to do the

¹ <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ts01g0bn9hy70ev/AABt4fsd0fHoY5ADF1B4zya9a?dl=0&preview=Millennials-Congregation+Confirmation+Survey+Report.pdf>

Christian education of Mount Olive's children, then I hope we're having something tasty for lunch, because I'm supposed to talk about it when we sit in your home. If you are hoping our teachers will take care of Christian education, save a seat in your vehicle, because they're supposed to talk about it as you go along the road. If you're leaving Christian education to the Sunday school staff, then ya'll are friendlier than I thought you were, because those conversations happen as you lie down to go to sleep and when you get up. I didn't know you guys were that close. I'm joking with you to make these verses stick in your memory. But do you see the point? Christian education God's way isn't done by the church, it's done 24/7/365. Parents are the only ones who can do that!

Maybe that's the reason for this statistic. According to that Missouri Synod study, students in Lutheran school are more likely to be connected to church, but after high school graduation, it doesn't matter what school they attended. Around 60% of high school graduates leave church regardless of where they went to school. School, youth ministry and Bible study are important, but in the long run they're not enough to make a difference. You know what did make a difference in that Missouri Synod study? They interviewed high school graduates who *are* still connected to church and guess what was a common theme. Parents. 1) Their parents were active church members. 2) Their parents lived out their faith in everyday life. 3) The kids were comfortable talking to their parents. That's how the study described effective Christian education. You know how God described those things? **1) Yahweh is our God. 2) These commandments that I give you are to be on your hearts. 3) Impress them on your children. Talk about them.**

That's why our school's mission statement says that "Mount Olive Evangelical Lutheran School assists parents with Christian training of children." Our whole ministry at Mount Olive is set up to do Christian education God's way, to lift up parents to impress God's word on their children 24/7/365. But I need you to forgive me. Because sometimes I act like our mission statement is just words on a page. I have failed to support and promote parents as Christian educators. And today God would have you search your heart. Friends, do you have God's word on your hearts and in your everyday lives like he commanded in Deuteronomy? Dads, moms, have you been investing the time, energy, and patience to listen to your children, to encourage them or correct them with the word of God? Grandmas and Grandpas, or people without children, have you used your conversations and your prayers to encourage parents and mentor young people? When it comes to Christian education, we all have some repenting to do.

Can you imagine if our god was Molech or Baal or Chemosh? With all our failures we'd owe we'd never be out of their doghouse. But those gods aren't real. Can you imagine if our god was academics or sports or reputation? There would be so much pressure on us to be the best and not mess up! But those things aren't god. Hear this, Christians, Yahweh is our God. **He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.** He proved it, when Yahweh himself came to earth and died on a cross so that we would never know God's punishment. Because Yahweh forgives, you don't have to be a sinless parent. You don't have to be a sinless grandma or grandpa or Sunday school teacher or pastor. Yahweh forgives and Yahweh is God.

So think of the impression it would make on our children if we showed them how to live like Yahweh is God. If we modeled what it looks like to trust in our Savior's forgiveness when we mess up. What if we modeled how to be sinner trusting a Savior? That's something worth handing down to the next generation.

With God's help, we can do Christian education God's way, and it will start with families that trust in Yahweh, know his words and impress them on their children. And then, if that's the kind of environment you have at home, just imagine the friendships, the role models, and the education here in Bible class, Sunday school, and our Lutheran school.

That's why we've been working on a family ministry plan at Mount Olive. We've been reading books and talking with other congregations to plan how we in this building can help you in your homes impress the goodness of Yahweh on your children. That's what we've been doing, and I need you to do two things. 1) Tonight, pray. Pray for our kids, and our parents and our church. Pray that we would do Christian education God's way. 2) Check your email. This week, you will receive an invitation to a survey designed to help us find more ways of encouraging parents to teach their children. The questions are open ended, and they'll take a little bit of thought. Talk about them with someone else. Take some time to think about them and send us your thoughts about family ministry.

That little girl I held when she was 5 hours old, her name is Nora Grace and she is now 4 days old. She's my niece. When I was done holding her, I placed her back in the arms of her dad, Steven. Together, we're a team for doing Christian education. Pastors like me gets to help. Dads like Steven get to lead. And the whole time, Yahweh is God. Amen.