

### **Deuteronomy 6:6-9**

*“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress 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. 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.”*

What would make a corporate lawyer give up his six-figure salary to make \$13 an hour? Lego®! It started at Christmas 1978 for Nathan Sawaya, when he opened his first set of Lego® bricks. As the years went on Nathan added to his collection of Legos. At age nine Nathan experienced a life-changing event. Nathan and his family were visiting the Alameda Square Mall in Denver Co. when they came upon a traveling Lego® tour. When Nathan saw a scale model of the White House and the Washington Monument both built entirely from Lego® bricks he was hooked. When he arrived home he quickly began building a replica of the Oregon state capital.

Nathan continued his obsession with Lego® and in 2004 he won a contest in San Diego as the best adult Lego® builder. Following that victory Nathan left his job, as a corporate lawyer, to become a Lego® master builder. Making only one-fifth his lawyer's salary did not matter to him – why – because he was now living his dream.<sup>i</sup>

Lego® actually dates back to 1932 in Billund, Denmark when they were first made out of wood. The name Lego® is derived from two Danish words *leg godt* meaning “play well.”

Why Lego®, what do they have to do with the church, let alone worship? I came across this concept a few years ago at Laity Conference @ Lake Junaluska NC when Bishop Woody White, the guest preacher, asked, “do you, does your life connect the dots.” What I became hooked on was the phrase “connect the dots.” And days later I read about Nathan and his Lego® building, and the thought came to me. The church is built by connecting. Worship is built by connecting. Relationships are built by connecting. Those who really know me and my prayer is that many of you will, but those who really know me know that I truly believe it’s all about our relationship with God.

Relationships exist on all levels due to connections. Connections exist inside and outside the church. The main point we need to understand is how do we connect, or how do we fit together? Today we connect with each other in many ways. We connect through e-mail, text messaging, phone calls, meetings, cards and letters. But is this really connecting with each other? Is this really connecting? Connecting with each other is important. True connecting should be what we strive for. Something else; each of these connections is a vital block within the church.

Lego® bricks can teach us a lot, if we take the time to listen. They teach us that each individual brick, or person metaphorically speaking, is interdependent on the next connection. This goes for the life of the church.

The properly placed brick within the structure provides strength and adds to the overall structure. The way in which each person connects with God determines the way each person will connect with each other. If you do not have a close relationship, or connection with God, then the same will be with your personal relationships. I believe our relationship with God directly affects our relationship with each other. They fit together.

We need to take steps to help us make sure that every “connection,” we make, reflects the living presence of Christ in our lives. If the church is the body of Christ, then each one of us is like a single “Lego®,” a part, but still a part of the image of Christ that, as the Church, presents to the world. Do you connect with everyone around you? Or do you only connect with those in your circle? When you connect with people do these people see Christ in you? How do you connect with those around you? How do you connect with strangers? As a Christian do you make every stranger you meet glad to have met you.

Have you ever known a person whose presence in any group made everything else different? Someone who, when he or she entered a room, made the spiritual and/or moral climate of that room better, someone who lifted the mood and spirit of that particular meeting?

Connecting releases the power of “*Synergy*.” What is *Synergy* you ask? *Synergy* is the combining of the efforts of two or more entities resulting in a greater sum than the individual could have achieved alone. WOW! The combining of efforts of two or more entities resulting in a greater sum than the individual could have achieved alone. In order to accomplish great things we must connect with each other. With this in mind, it is fair to say that if we fail to connect then we fail.

God wants us to connect with Him. Then, God wants us to connect with each other. Not the other way around! We first must have a strong tight connection with God, then and only then can we go and have a strong and tight connection with each other. Looking at this morning’s Scripture, God connected with Moses and then he in turn connects with the people and us when he said, “*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.*”

The only way these or any commandments can be upon our hearts is if we have a connection, is if we have an intimate relationship with God. This is first and foremost, we must connect with God!

Once we have truly connected with God, we are not, we cannot remain motionless. We must go forth and connect with each other. When we truly connect we are compelled to, as our text says *“Impress 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. 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.”* The only way we could pass on what God has given us is to first have received it, and this is not possible staying home alone, or staying apart from people. You know what I mean; you live and work beside, but not with people. We are to go out and compel people, connect with other people, all people. This means we are not to sit back and wait for people to come to us we are to go to them.

Where would this country be if Columbus had decided not to go, but waited for the native Indians to come to him? Where would we be if individuals who started this church had waited for people to come to them

and serve them? And don't sit there and think for one minute any one of us here can sit back and claim anything these individual did as our own; because we can't. What they did, they did because of their relationship with God, and because of their relationship with God they desired to connect with those around them! What you do, and who you connect with is reflective of your relationship, or lack of with God.

Notice another thing about Lego® bricks; they are not like Velcro®, just latching on to something randomly, even where they are not meant to connect. Lego® designs are intentional in their connections, allowing someone who can see the big picture to fit all parts together. Bringing them together requires the ability to connect to God, and to connect with the people. What does it mean to be connected??

It means power! When we hear people say, "I have connections." It means "I have access to power. I can get it done." I heard a humorous story about a successful businessman who was invited to deliver the commencement address at a school. He elected to speak on the subject, "How to Succeed." As he entered the door leading to the auditorium stage, he noticed the word PUSH printed in bold letters on the door. He thought

that would be a good theme for his speech PUSH. When he hit the high point of his speech, he said, “I can sum up my message in one word,” and he pointed to the door . . . and the students started laughing. Puzzled, the speaker looked at the door. Printed on this side was not the word PUSH but the word PULL.<sup>ii</sup> How often have we said, “It is not WHAT you know, but WHO you know?” Do you know God?

Julius Little of Greenville, North Carolina was hospitalized for congestive heart failure. The doctor warned him his recovery would be slow. His daughter Judy told him not to worry, “Everybody in my church is praying for you.” Still, he said, he was fearful. In a matter of days, though, he began to rally. In fact, in practically no time he felt like himself again. His doctor saw no reason why Julius and his wife couldn't go through with their travel plans to visit Opryland, on their way to visit their daughter Judy in Blue Springs, Mo.

And so they made their way to Opryland. It was hot and crowded in the theme park, so Mrs. Little rested on a shady bench while Julius went to find a cold drink. While waiting for her husband, Mrs. Little struck up a conversation with two friendly ladies sitting beside her on the bench.

They couldn't believe it when she told them she and her husband were on their way to Blue Springs, Mo. to visit their daughter. "Why, we're from Blue Springs!" said one of the women. "What's your daughter's name?"

Julius walked up just as this friendly woman said that she was a member of Judy's prayer chain. Then she exclaimed to Julius, "I've been praying for you. I thought you were really sick . . . What in the world are you doing standing here?" Julius smiled and said boldly. "I'm standing here, because of you and your prayers."<sup>iii</sup> Julius was convinced he was standing there because he was connected. He was connected to the ultimate source of power and healing. That is the first thing we should mean when we say we are connected. We have power.

To be connected also means we have a presence. We have a presence in our lives. We are not alone. Someone shares our life. Someone is there for us. Is there anyone sadder than the person who is not connected to somebody? Consider the alleged una-bomber an obviously intelligent man who reportedly committed bizarre and cruel acts.

We should realize that the main part of his problem was that he cut himself off from family, colleagues, and friends? There is something about isolation that does something to the human spirit, whether that isolation is chosen or whether it is caused by circumstances beyond our control.

Many of you have had the experience of being cut off from someone you love by distance, death or divorce. There is no more devastating experience in life, is there? The loneliness and the sense of isolation can be overwhelming. All kinds of experiences can cause us to feel disconnected. Sometimes it's having your children grow up and leave home. Paul Tournier tells a story about a lonely lady he once knew who turned on her radio every night just to hear an announcer with a friendly voice say, "We bid you a very good evening." Why? Because that was her the main connection with the world. She felt the announcer was the only person who cared about her.<sup>iv</sup>

We all have a need to be connected. We need to know that there are people who care about us. We need to know that we are not alone. Of course, this is where our faith comes in a powerful way. Our faith tells us we are not alone. We are never alone no matter how bad or isolated our situation seems.

Columnist Sheila Graham had a compelling interview with Ruby Bridges Hall sometime back. Maybe that name doesn't strike a bell. It will for some of you if I describe what Ruby went through as a child. Ruby looked like a typical first-grader. With a big bow in her hair and lunch box in hand, she climbed the steps of William Frantz Elementary School for the first day of school, but nothing else was typical about that day in November 1960. Though she wasn't aware of it, Ruby had been chosen to be the first African-American child to integrate in this particular New Orleans grade school. Every day on her way to school, escorted by armed federal marshals, she braved angry people shouting at her as she entered an empty classroom. White parents had moved their children to other schools. Ruby did not realize until later, when a little boy told her why he couldn't play with her, that she was the reason for all the commotion.

In her interview Ms. Graham noted that even in this stressful situation of having mobs scream at her, little Ruby prayed every day, she prayed before and after school, for those who were verbally abusing her. Ms. Ruby Hall explained it this way: "One thing my mother always said to me was that when she couldn't be with me, if I was ever afraid, I should say my prayers.

Even at night, if I would wake up from a nightmare and want to get up and go to her room, she would immediately ask, ‘did you say your prayers?’ That’s where that came from and it sort of stuck with me.”<sup>v</sup>

Ruby's mother wanted her to know that no matter the situation she was never alone. She was connected. To be connected is to have power. To be connected is to have an eternal presence in your life. It is to know someone cares about you. Do you know that someone cares about you? Are you connected this morning? Do you have this inner desire to connect with the world, or are you one of those lone individuals set off by yourself thinking you connected? Are you connected this morning? Are you connected with God? Do you know Him as your personal Lord and Savior? If you do not know Him personally, don't let another moment go by come now and become connected with God.

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<sup>i</sup> Ron Hunter Jr. & Michael E. Waddell, *Toy Box Leadership; Leadership lessons from the toys you loved as a child,* (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2008) pp.1-2.

<sup>ii</sup> Joe Gordon, SPEAKER'S LIBRARY OF BUSINESS.

<sup>iii</sup> GUIDEPOSTS Jan.1997 p.17.

<sup>iv</sup> "Reach Out!" by Frank Minirth, TODAY'S BETTER LIFE, Spring 1994, p. 38.

<sup>v</sup> "Dignity Under Fire," THE PLAIN TRUTH, May/June 1996, p. 28.