**Stand By Me**

**As many of you know I was active in theater for over 30 years. Don’t worry I don’t plan to sing or dance right now. What I do want to do is to talk to you for a moment about one of my favorite shows I was ever involved in. The show was called Into The Woods. Written by Stephen Sondheim, it is the telling of several famous fairytales intertwined together, then followed by the stories of what happens after the happily ever after. During that show there is a poignant moment when the witch, after reflecting on failures with her daughter, sings a song called The Witch’s Lament. It is a deeply moving song about regret of a parent. I would like to read a part of the chorus to you:**

**Careful the things you say
Children will listen
Careful the things you do
Children will see and learn
Children may not obey, but children will listen
Children will look to you for which way to turn**

**I think that these few short verses of this chorus drive home the meaning of Andy’s message last week. Our young people are looking to us as parents to show them the path of faith to follow. Our actions whether we like it or not lay the scaffolding that our young people build their faith upon. But I believe that Andy made this really clear last week so I will not belabor the point.**

 **Instead, before many of you parents out there today feel too overwhelmed by this prospect you are not alone in this. Look around you; everyone you see has been called to help as well. We the church are, as Paul outlines in 1 Corinthians, “to function as partnering agents as we collaboratively participate in Jesus’ work” because we are intrinsically connected one to another, without regard to gifts, function, power, status, or age.” Dennis Guernsey, in his book A New Design For Family Ministry, puts it this way – “ The Church is a family of Families…. The church of the first century were called to leave their earthly familial allegiances and to bond to one another as the new family of God. The revolutionary impact of the first-century church was their love for one another as Christ had commanded them.” Let me say that Last part again: The revolutionary impact of the first-century church was their love for one another as Christ had commanded them. We are, if we are living the life of the church that Jesus called us to, bound together in relationship, each of us, to love one another, to care for one another, and to stand by each other at all times. This is what a Sticky Church does. This call can actually be traced back to ancient Israel and is seen in our scripture for today.**

 **Our scripture today comes from Deuteronomy and it gives us specific instructions that I believe apply to our sticky faith journey. If you want to take a moment and find Deuteronomy 6:4-9, I would like to walk through these verses with you. This section is often referred to as the Shema. A derivative from the Hebrew verb that means, “to hear”, the verb appears in its imperative form and so stresses the importance of paying attention and understanding the words that follow. Taken in context many scholars believe that it might more accurately be understood as “Hear and OBEY.” I think about times when my girls were young and I really wanted them to hear something, so I said stop doing what your doing and listen to me. Put down that toy. Turn away from the TV. Put the phone down. What I am saying is important. I sure most of us have been in that situation on one side or the other. So verse 4 here was designed to get Israel’s attention that something important is coming next. In vs. 5 and 6 we quickly find out what is so important. Remember that this text follows immediately after the Ten Commandments and in fact the section where it appears in many translations is labeled the great commandment. Love God with all your heart and soul and might. Heart. Soul. Might. The scripture then follows that by saying keep these words in your heart. Most biblical scholars believe that this Shema is the heart of God’s covenant with his people. In fact this text and its message is so important that it is referenced in each of the synoptic Gospels. Twice by Jesus and once by someone in conversation with Jesus, in all three cases Jesus stresses that this is the greatest of all the commandments.**

**I recently, like most of us, went through the process of doing my taxes. Now I do not trust myself to do my own so I have someone else do it. When you go in to sign the papers they now have bright dummy proof stickers to show you where to sign. You are signing a contract so it is important that you do it right. I liken this verse of the Shema to those stickers. It lays out the terms of the contract and shows you how to sign.**

**So at this point many of you might be trying to figure out how this connects to the sticky faith series. I believe that verses 7-9 are central to sticky faith. The text thus far has established what is most important to God in our covenant or relationship with him. These next verses tell us what we are to do with this information.**

 **We are called to impress this covenant faith on our children. Verses 7-9 tells us to**

**“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. 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.”**

**When you first read this it may seem a bit confusing, tell them when you’re sitting at home or tie them on your forehead. But here is the thing; the message summary is for the people of Israel to show and tell their children in every aspect of their life. Several scholars suggest that this means that they are to continue the covenant by teaching their children. Jesus then renewed this covenant with us. And we as a church “family of families” should continue that with our young people. We are called to do this in our every day life. Several weeks ago, those of you who were here participated in Landon Furr’s dedication. Much of that dedication dealt with Landon’s parent’s commitment to raising him in a Christian home. But there is a part of that calls to you his church family. Let me remind you what that says:**

**Do you as members of First Baptist Church realize that in a sense Landon is your child, too? Are you willing to provide the kind of church that will contribute to his spiritual maturity? Are you willing to pray, to witness, to support, and to teach Landon and his parents all the days of their lives so that they may dwell in the house of the Lord forever?**

**And you finished it with “We do”. You made a commitment to Landon and to all of the other children who have been dedicated in this church. Most churches that I know of do the same thing. So it seems that we should be doing well following that simple imperative found in Deuteronomy right? Unfortunately, when the research team at FYI polled seniors, they found that — out of the following five categories (adults in the congregation, parents, youth workers, friends in youth, and friends out of youth) -- adults in the church ranked last as sources of support. Last! That’s not good enough. They found that those that did feel supported felt like they were there because the adults had taken time to forge a relationship with them. It was the little day-to-day things that showed them love.**

 **One of my favorite movies is the movie Stand By Me. It is the story of four young boys that set out to find a body of young missing boy. The story is told as a flashback by one of the boys who have grown up to become a writer. At one point as he is thinking back he says, “I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve.” If you watch the movie it was because they went on the journey that he felt this way, no it was the individual moments that they shared along they way. The talks and the fears that they shared, the time that they spent together looking after one another, these were the things that made them close. Isn’t that want we want for our young people to feel about this church family. To look back and say I never felt more supported and loved than when I was at First Baptist.**

 **In his song Beautiful Boy John Lennon says, “Life is what happens while we are busy making other plans.” What he means is that life is really about all the little moments that we have together everyday. What if faith happens in the same way? I believe that we spend too much time trying to tell our young people about Jesus’ love and not enough time investing in showing them his love. I will say that again, I believe that we spend too much time trying to tell our young people about Jesus’ love and not enough time investing in showing them his love. I think that as a church that wants to instill sticky faith we have to commit our time to standing by our young people. Helping them to see, like the text today says, our love for God and his love for us in everyday life. Not just at dedications, not just at church events, not just when we are in the walls of this church, but wherever we are and during whatever we face. We have to be intentional. Deuteronomy calls us to action with the command to impress upon our children the greatest commandment. That is to love. I challenge you to do this through your actions on a daily basis. Remember what you do matters. As the opening song said**

**Careful the things you say
Children will listen
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Children may not obey, but children will listen
Children will look to you for which way to turn**

**What will our young people hear today? What will they see? Won’t you join me in helping them find a faith that will stick? Want you Stand by** **ME? Let us pray.**