



**May 28, 2006**

Preaching: Rev. Eunbae Doh

CELEBRATION SUNDAY

## “Homemade Christian”

We have been doing this special Celebration Sunday worship every year. We all know this is the Sunday which we give thanks to God at the end of our school year, and celebrate our achievement. Yes, we do. First of all, I want to thank all of the Sunday School leaders and teachers.

Now, I'd like to share with you the most important lesson which I learned from my experience as a Christian educator. It is a simple and well known message but not easy to do. The lesson is that Christian education must be done at home not just Church or Sunday School. Christian home is the best place and true foundation for Christian education.

There is a story about Mencius who was a great philosopher and lived in China in 300 B.C. His family lived in the area around the cemetery. Little Mencius played a funeral game everyday. His mother really worried about that. So, she moved to another city. Their new home was near a market place. The little boy started to pretend to be a merchant, the people selling or buying. But his mother didn't want him to be a business man. So they had to move again. The third place where they moved was a little village which has a great school like the cities of Ann Arbor, home of University of Michigan, Urbana Champaign of University of Illinois, or Saint Charles of Lincoln Elementary. After they moved there, Mencius played a school game, pretending to be a teacher. Finally, his mother was satisfied.

This story tells us how important educational environment is. Korean mothers have great concern and passion about educating their children. Korean moms are like the mother of Mencius. They are spending a lot of money, time, and energy to educate their children. They are moving to find great schools. There are so many single daddies in Korea, separated from their wife and children who live in other countries to give their children better learning opportunity.

It is also the same situation at Church. Many parents are choosing their Church on the basis of how great the Sunday school program is. Therefore many Churches put huge amounts of money into the ministry of Christian education, expecting Church growth.

I believe that this is not only situation in Korean but also in USA, because every mom and daddy loves their children. There is no exception. All parents to want to give their kids a better educational environment.

When I think about this situation, I'm really uncomfortable about that. It makes me feel sad, because I know Christian education is not a matter of great curriculum, well organized programs, trained teacher or facility. Christian education is begun at home and ended at home.

Let think about this. How much time are your children spending at Church in a week? They spend about 40 hours at school. And they stay at home more than 80 hours. But they just spend an hour or two hours at Church. What are you expecting here? Do you really think your children can be nurtured fully at church in an hour?

Yes, we can provide your children some opportunity to learn about God. We can teach them what Bible says. But spiritual formation and growing in faith can not be carried in a short term program or one hour Bible class. Truly, I say, you must teach your children at home where your kids spend the most time in their life.

The passage of Deuteronomy we read today is a word given to Israel. Remember, this is the word of God given to parents, not a priest or teacher in Jewish society.

They have been keeping this God's word at home for several thousands years. Even though they live in this modern society which has great, well developed education system and electronic culture. they are still educating their children following God's commandment. The destruction of Jerusalem was a great blessing for Israel, because it was a turning point to change their religious center from a building to the word of God, from liturgy to education. You may know who they are. The people who are educated by the most primitive education system became the most powerful group in this world.

Unfortunately, in our age, many Churches are losing people and face the reality of decline. Why? There will be a lot of reasons. But I believe that the most important reason is failure in Christian education, especially at home. Think about it. Where are your children now? How many of our children in this sanctuary will remain as children of God. I don't like graduation services, because after the service, many children graduate from Church forever.

Do you know which country is taking first place in sending missionaries abroad. The first is USA and second is Korea. But these two countries share the same situation, struggling with losing membership, losing social influence, and losing future. I want to ask these two

Churches where their true mission field is. You are losing your children in your own yard. Why are you looking for lost sheep far away?

We need to see our reality and future. There is no future if we lose our children in our Church, if we don't teach them at our home. You are the missionary who God has sent to your home.

We need to recover our home as a foundation of Christian education to make our Church alive in the future. John Wesley who transformed Britain and renewed their Church was a homemade Christian. Many Christian leaders were homemade Christian. I'm also a homemade Christian. Even though I attended Sunday School until I became an adult, for me it is hard to remember what I learned from Sunday School.

How do we teach our children at home? What can we do? We need to do something like the Jewish or Susana Wesley?

I want to tell you one thing, spiritual leadership. Parents need to recover their spiritual leadership at home. What is leadership? Leadership is influence. How can we have a powerful influence at home? How to be a spiritual leader at our home? It is simple. Just stand as the head and go. Your children will follow you. You don't have to push them. You don't need to teach them how to do, what to do. Just show them a way. They will see what you see. They will listen to what you listen to. They will say what you say. You are the way.

Last Sunday when I went home, my daughter and son come to me and said, "Daddy, do you know what we played today?" Well, I had no idea. "What did you do?" She said, "We played communion!" When I heard that I was little disappointed, because I want my daughter be a novelist like JK Rowling of Harry Potter so that my daughter can fulfill her promise to buy a luxury car for me.

The Christian education committee of our Church and I are making progress on a new ministry plan for our Church. We will review our current situation and develop a new curriculum, program, and system. But my biggest concern is not making new things for Sunday School. My main concern is seeking and developing better ways to help our family and parents so that they can recover their spiritual leadership at home for seven days and support them to nurture their children in Christ. I believe this is the best thing I can do for our Church as a Christian educator.

Brothers and sisters in Christ.

What is the best thing you can give your children? Sports? School? Money?

Give them Jesus through you life at home.

Help them grow to be a homemade Christian.