



# GOD'S 5G FAMILY PLAN

Hey everyone, welcome to WEEK 4 of our original series, "God's 5G Family Plan." Today we're going to address God's 5G Plan for... PARENTS! Have you ever wondered what the "G" in 5G stands for? Generation! So it's supposed to imply that it's high-tech, like 5th Gen. But for our purpose, think of it as GENERATIONS. Future generations of your family. Did you know that God has a PLAN to BLESS the future generations of your family? Would you like to know it? Cuz we're talking about that today!

Mona and I are blessed with three wonderful children, Mark, Rachael, and Caleb. They're all grown up now, and we are loving our season as empty-nesters. Don't get me wrong, we love our kids. But it was never our intention to keep them home for the rest of their lives. In fact, quite the opposite. We were getting them ready for their inevitable departure one day. We praise God every day that they have their own walks with Jesus, have a good sense of God's call, and take ownership and personal responsibility over their lives. In other words, dey no ask daddy fo money! Haha!

## ***1. If you're a parent (or plan to be some day), what is your vision for how you would want your children to turn out?***

Of course, that's NOT how they were when we first got them. I remember when Caleb was maybe 10, he was playing a lot of X-box. All Mark had when he was that age was a Nintendo 64, remember those? And the only reason he had that was because a friend was getting rid of his and gave it to Mark. But once X-box came into our lives, we ALL started gaming, including daddy. And gaming was awesome! But it was also incredibly addicting. And poor Caleb was so little, he had no self-control whatsoever. He was constantly asking me if he could play X-box. "Dad, can I play X-box? Dad, can I play X-box?" As soon as he got home from school, first thing, "Dad, can I play X-box?" Do your homework! After homework can I play X-box? Geez Lou-eez! So finally I said, "Caleb, stop asking me if you can play X-box every time. That's your flesh speaking. So BEFORE you ask me, I want you to PRAY first. And ask the Holy Spirit if you should ask dad to play X-box. Ok? So what are you going to do?" "Pray first." "Good!" "Got it?" "Got it!" A minute later, "Dad, can I play X-box?" "Caleb! What did I just tell you! I said ask the Holy Spirit first before you ask me!" "I did, dad, I did!" "And what did the Holy Spirit say?" He said, "Just do it! Do it!" That has become a running joke in our family whenever we're trying to justify something. "Dad, why did you eat all the ice cream?" "Holy Spirit said, just do it! Do it!" Blasphemy!

## ***2. Describe a frustrating situation with your child.***

## ***3. What is JOB ONE for Christian parents?***



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So what is JOB ONE for Christian parents? Chores? Sports? Good grades? Get your kid to college? All those are fine. But JOB ONE for Christian parents is to pray and teach your child to develop a relationship with Jesus and listen to the Holy Spirit. Obviously, at first they're NOT going to get it. You don't need to teach a child to be fleshly and selfish--deyz all born dat way! But you need to help them cultivate their own personal, intimate relationship with Jesus.

#### ***4. If you find yourself having to tell your child what to do over and over again, how do we EMPOWER them to do God's will and make the right decision? What does it mean to "enable" them?***

We want to, here it is, EMPOWER our children not ENABLE them. Turn to the person next to you and say, "Empower, don't enable." When our children have a strong relationship with Jesus they are EMPOWERED to make good decisions in life. But if we just keep telling our children what to do, then they won't learn how to listen for the Father's voice, and we risk enabling them. Being a parent can be frustrating, I know. I could've just shut Caleb down completely, essentially saying, "Just give me the behavior that I want, and cut this out." And honestly, there are times when you have to do that, especially when kids are small. Sometimes it is not appropriate to have a "discussion." Kids just need to listen to mommy and daddy. Absolutely nothing wrong with that. But the older a child gets, the more we need to teach and explain. So I'm trying to teach Caleb to learn to listen to the Holy Spirit first--and doing a bad job, I might add. But that's the general idea. This is a baby step toward discerning God's will. At first it's about simple obedience and building Christ-like character. You're trying to help them take ownership and responsibility for their thoughts and actions, and make good choices. But it's not just about being a good person. In the life of the Spirit, we have a vision for the next level. In other words, we're not just teaching "character" and "critical thinking." We want those. But we are also helping them develop their own Spiritual relationship with God so they can discern Spiritual direction. Let me say that again: We are helping our kids develop their own Spiritual relationship with God so they can discern Spiritual direction for their lives. This is the conviction that God Himself is personally directing them into His very best for their lives. Isn't that great?

When Mark was in high school, mom found out he was in a relationship. Filipino, I tell you! So Mona had a wonderful conversation with him. She said, "Mark, it's not wrong for you to have a girlfriend, but as soon as your relationship with her starts to hurt your relationship with Jesus, you need to ask God what you should do. A few weeks later, it was over. Empower, don't enable. Over time, we want to eventually wean our children off of relying on us to tell them what to do at every turn. Our kids need to learn the Spirit's control over their lives. Let's face facts, mom and dad. If we don't figure out how to have these conversations with our kids, then they will do stuff behind our backs. We don't need to have perfect conversations. We can be honest and say, "Let's seek the Lord together."

## **5. How do we have good conversations with our child, even if it might be awkward or uncomfortable?**

But don't shy away from having conversations with your child even if it might awkward and uncomfortable. For example, don't shy away from having that conversation about the birds and the bees. My Filipino Catholic parents NEVER talked about that with us. I had to find out from my friends at school, and they had a very pornographic way of explaining it. We didn't want that to happen to our kids, so WE were the ones who explained it to them. Uh... except for Rachael. She found out accidentally when she was around eight. Ok, so here's what happened. We were living in Canada at the time, driving home, and Rachael was sitting in her booster seat in the back. Well, Mona just became hapai with Caleb and we were going to explain it to the kids. So we had one of those "anatomy books" for kids on the backseat, next to Rachael. You know, the one with a lot of pictures. Well, we were driving along when suddenly we hear, "Oh, that's gross!" from our 8-year-old. I was driving, so Mona turned around and was horrified to see Rachael looking at the pictures in that book. Mona grabbed the book away, but too late! Our innocent little baby girl was introduced to how babies are made. Mona tried to explain that it was beautiful and all part of God's plan, and that her new baby brother was about to come into the world because of this. Well, we could see all the pieces starting to come together in her precocious little mind. "Mommy, you said that you getting pregnant was an accident, but you knew! You knew! You had to know! Aw, that's gross! That is so gross!" She had this cute little routine of running into our bedroom first thing in the morning, as kids do, and jumping into bed to snuggle between mommy and daddy as we were still half asleep. Right on cue, the next morning she jumped into bed with us as she always did. Half asleep, I saw her smiling contently between us. Then suddenly her face changed. She looked at mommy. Then she looked at me. Then she looked straight ahead, thought for a second, and said, "Aw, gross! Aw gross!" Try not to traumatize your kid like that and plan to have good conversations, no matter how awkward or uncomfortable it may be.

So JOB ONE for Christian parents is to pray and teach our kids to love Jesus first, listen to the Holy Spirit, and make good choices. We pray they will have their own personal relationship with Jesus and seek Him for Spiritual direction in every area of their lives. But how does this happen exactly? What does God say in the Bible about it? You will be happy to know that there are some very powerful teachings in God's word about this, and that it is God's TOP PRIORITY!

But before I answer those questions, check out these amazing stats:

- Less than .1% of Jewish men are in prison
- 20% of professors at leading US universities are Jewish
- 25% of Nobel Peace laureates are Jewish
- 33% of US millionaires are Jewish



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40% of attorneys in New York and Washington DC are Jewish  
The percentage of Jewish households with annual incomes greater than \$50K is double that of non-Jewish families  
Jesus was Jewish

## **6. What is the secret to the success of the Jewish culture?**

## **7. Why is the Shema such a powerful strategy from generation to generation?**

We're talking about only 15 million Jews in a world of 8 billion people. Why are they so incredibly successful as a people? Many factors, but the main reason is the SHEMA. Everyone say, "Shema." Remember I said at the beginning of this message, that today we would learn God's plan to bless the future generations of your family? Here it is. The practice of Shema is God's powerful strategy for teaching generation after generation after generation of His people to remain faithful to Him. Every generation teaches the Shema to the next generation who will teach it to the next generation and so forth. And it happens quietly in the privacy of your own home. Parents teach their kids who teach their kids and so on. You could destroy the nation of Israel and banish the Jews into exile, and they will still follow God the same way. Why? Because the Shema is taught at home. It doesn't depend on government. You could try to annihilate every Jewish person like the Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and the Nazis did, and somehow they will still keep following God with the same faith. How? By teaching the Shema AT HOME. [Tell the person next to you, "Teach the Shema at home!"] This is how powerful God's strategy of SHEMA is. It is the greatest, most powerful parenting strategy the world has ever known. This is God's ORIGINAL 5G Family Plan! And it is found in this passage in the Bible. Let's read it together:

*<sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7 ESV).*

You know how we all have our favorite verses? In Israel, this is EVERYONE's favorite verse. When Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment in the Bible?" He said it was the SHEMA.

## **8. What are the main features of the Shema, God's 5G Plan for Parents?**



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Let's quickly highlight the MAIN FEATURES of God's 5G Plan for Parents, the SHEMA. So the word SHEMA is the word "hear," the first word in this passage. In Hebrew they sing it every morning and it sounds like this: Shema Israel. Adonai eloheinu. Adonai Echad. So "shema" is the first word we translate into English as "hear." It literally means "hear and obey." So God starts off by saying, "Hey, Israel, hear and obey." Don't just hear God, you must obey Him. If you don't obey God, then you didn't hear Him. Shema means "hear and obey" God. Who is God to us? We translate it "LORD" with all caps, but that is actually God's Name! His Name is Yahweh. The Jews, out of reverence, refuse to say His Name out loud. So they say "LORD" or Adonai. But God is saying, "I don't just want you to know about Me, I want you to know Me in person! My Name is Yahweh. And I'm the same God who talked to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. And I will love and lead you as I loved and led them." God is saying if you follow Me as they did, you will learn to love Me. And so begins our journey to LOVE God passionately. As we follow Him, the Shema teaches that we will learn to throw our entire being into loving God--ALL our hearts, ALL our soul, ALL our might. We will hold nothing back in our love for God. Then in verse 6 God is saying to treasure His will in our hearts. That means memorize this verse. Learn it by heart! So for your homework today, memorize the Shema as a family! Commit this to memory. [Turn to your family and say, "Let's memorize this!"] Next God says, "Diligently teach this to your children." Ok, here we go. Obviously, He's talking to parents here. So everything He just said must first and foremost apply to the Spiritual lives of our parents. We parents need to hear and obey God with great joy and intense passion. And then mom and dad diligently teach this to the children. How many of us know, we can't teach what we don't know? And most of this is caught not taught. So our first priority then as parents is to examine our own Spiritual lives. We need to get face to face with God, learn to listen to His voice, and love and obey Him with our whole being before we can pass it on to our kids. Now listen: If you are a mom or dad today, you'll never hear condemnation from anyone at this Church. We totally understand how incredibly difficult, even impossible, it seems to raise godly kids today. Let's pray and encourage each other as we practice the SHEMA.

## ***9. Is there a ministry at New Hope Central Oahu that trains parents on how to practice the Shema at home? What is it and how does it work?***

In fact did you know we have an outstanding children and youth ministry here at New Hope Central Oahu? Pastor Mark oversees it. You may be saying, "But I thought Pastor Mark was the official Teaching Pastor at our Church." You're exactly right. We do not have a Children's or Youth Pastor at this Church. The reason is the primary youth instructors at our Church are not paid professionals. They are not "hirelings" we acquire to babysit our kids so we can have a night off. Remember God's 5G Plan for Parents? Remember the SHEMA? The greatest authority on Earth to teach our children does not reside in the Church. God has placed that authority in the HOME, and in the hearts of the persons who would naturally have the greatest incentive to make sure we have the best youth ministry in the world, because they were the ones God hand-selected to bring children into the world. At our Church the primary instructors of our youth are parents. "But Mike," you'll say, "we don't necessarily know how to teach the Bible or



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Spiritual life to our kids. We're still learning that ourselves!" So I'll let you in on a little secret. Pastor Mark's job as our Teaching Pastor is NOT just to teach. His job is to EQUIP teachers. So Pastor Mark is there to coach you in becoming the best teachers you can be for your kids. Our philosophy for children's and youth ministry is SHEMA, God's 5G Family Plan. Listen, I know this goes against the tide of church youth ministry. You might be tempted to think, "Forget this! I can go to Brand X Church down the road and they have 100 kids in their youth group, with cool youth leaders, with skinny jeans, big screens, and fog machines." Well, if you don't know my story, that youth leader was me 30-40 years ago. At the end of my 16 years of youth ministry, I was exhausted, burnt out, and disillusioned with that whole approach to reaching youth. My conclusion was that you can't reach kids with just big rallies, youth meetings, and Bible studies. Even if you spent a whole week with them at summer camp, I still couldn't find over half of them 6 months later. Frustrated, I cried out to God and said, "I need more staff! These kids need someone who will be there for them 24/7, who will love and mentor them personally and individually." It was as if the heavens opened in that moment and God said, "Mike, I've already thought of that. They're called parents." You see, as a young whipper snapper fresh out of college, I thought I was going to change the world with my youth ministry. You know, take on the whole Empire by myself! But it wasn't until I became a dad, that I saw the power and authority of parents. That's why our Church youth ministry is dedicated to empowering PARENTS to fulfill their God-appointed role to teach the love of God diligently to their children. That is the heart of the SHEMA, the most powerful family strategy the world has ever known. Mom and dad, don't abdicate that role to anyone else, certainly not to our education system, not even to the Church. God gave this important assignment to YOU. And the Church is here by your side to empower you every step of the way. And THAT is God's 5G Plan for Parents.

**10. What did you "hear" God say to you today and how will you "obey" Him?**