

May 29, 2005
Pentecost 2

"What God Wants for Our Families"

DEUTERONOMY 11:18-21, 26-28

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ²⁰ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, ²¹ so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth. ²⁶ See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse-- ²⁷ the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; ²⁸ the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.

This Memorial Day weekend the campgrounds on the Central Coast of California are filled with people sleeping in tents and RV's for several nights. If you have ever done any extended camping in a primitive camping area, you know how good it feels to come home, take a warm shower, and sleep in your own bed.

Think of camping out in the desert, roughing it, for 40 years of your life. That is what happened to God's people under the leadership of Moses. For 40 years they wandered in the desert. Then the Lord took them across the Jordan River and gave them the Promised Land. Houses they did not build, fruit from orchards they did not plant, sheep and goats they did not raise. How exciting that must have been for a generation of people who knew nothing except camping in the desert and roughing it.

With the thrill of entering the new land came the danger of forgetting the Lord. Moses spoke to the people as they prepared to enter a land flowing with milk and honey. He warned them about becoming so carried away with their rich blessings that they would forget the Lord who gave these blessings.

On this Memorial Day weekend we remember the soldiers who died to protect our land and give us the freedoms and rich prosperity we enjoy today. With prosperity comes the danger of forgetting the Lord, a danger more real for us today than it was for God's people poised on the banks of the Jordan. What's the antidote for being poisoned by the very prosperity we enjoy? Moses told the people to fix the words of the Lord on their hearts and minds. That's what God wants for us who lived in a land richer than any nation on earth. This morning I want to use these words of God just read to you to speak about **"What The Lord Wants for Our Families."**

1) The Lord wants his Word to be in our homes

Listen again to what the Lord says. "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds, tie them to as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads." I am holding in my

hand a water bottle that is used for hiking. The water bottle has a clip that can be used to keep it fixed or attached to the back pack and not get lost. God wants his Word fixed or attached to your life, the way you would tie something tight with a string, tape it with duck tape, screw it to a wall, wire it tight so it will not fall apart.

Do you know that even to this day some very religious Jewish people take these words literally and make little boxes that they tie to their foreheads and to their arms? Inside these little boxes they place verses from the Bible written in Hebrew? One website says that putting on these little boxes and saying your prayers in the morning is one of the best good works you can do for God. They even have little boxes near the doorframes of their homes where they also tuck in little scrolls of paper to fix God's word in their lives.

I am holding in my hand a little Bible given to me by a soldier who served in Iraq. Merely keeping this Bible in my pocket close to my heart, or having a Bible on the coffee table in the living room is not what the Lord is asking us to do. He wanted his people to take the words that were given to them on Mount Sinai through Moses and make these words a daily part of their lives. "Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." This happens when families actually read the Bible together in the home, or talk about parts of the Bible they have read in their personal devotions. The greatest blessing that can come into any home in this land is the blessing of God's Word being openly read and discussed in the family environment.

What is the greatest blessing in your home? Is it the furniture in the house, the televisions and computers, the food you eat, the clothes you wear, the love you have for each other? No the greatest blessing is the Word of God that exists in your home, not just in a Bible that sits on the table, but a Bible that is read and shared and is a part of each person's life.

A national study of Protestant congregations taken in 1990 claimed this about our youth. "In the vast majority of cases, parents remain the single most important influence in the development of an adolescents personality." If a parent takes time to be alone with the Lord and be filled with the Word, they will be given opportunities to talk with their children about what they have seen in the Word. These words of the Lord apply to families of every generation: "Teach them to your children, talking about them as you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Even though the television is on 7 hours a day, and few families eat meals together, or work together, there are still times when we walk, when we sit, when drive, when we work, when the opportunities will come to talk about what God has revealed to us in his Word.

I like what one Christian mother wrote about her kids. "Children are learners. They learn everywhere. They learn sitting down and standing up. They learn wide-awake and half asleep. They take in knowledge through their eyes, ears, nose, taste buds, fingers, feet and skin. They learn while their parents are teaching and they learn when their parents hope they are not teaching. They learn from hot, cold, work, play, comfort, discomfort... no knobs turn off their little minds."

Another person said, "If I can spend the day's first moments alone with God, girding my mind with silence, feasting on the Word, listening, I am more ready to greet the day and my

family. God and I have a head start on them.” God wants his Word to be fixed in our families and read in our homes. Colossians 3 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...”

2) The Lord wants to bless us

Why does the Lord want you to attach his Word to your life? When the Word comes into your life it changes you and blesses you. Listen to Moses speak to the people for the Lord. “So that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord your God swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heaven is above the earth.” The Lord is telling his people, “If you want a little heaven on earth, if you want to enjoy prosperity and live long in the land, then follow words that I have given to Moses, and be the kind of people I have called you to be.”

The Lord called these people to be different from every other people on the face of this earth. These were the people from whom the Messiah would come to bless all other nations. These were the people who were given rules and regulations for their religious life and their home life that separated and made them different, even strange and weird to other people. They were not allowed to work on the Sabbath. They were not allowed to eat certain foods. They could only worship the Lord in the temple in Jerusalem. They had to offer animal sacrifices involved that pictured the future Savior sacrificed for the sins of the world. Let’s make it very clear this morning that these rules and regulations did not save the people, just as coming to worship, or praying or helping other people does not make you a Christian. They were saved the same way that we are saved, by trusting in a Savior who was to come, just as we put our trust in a Savior who has come.

What does it say happened to these families who followed these words of Moses carefully? They were blessed. Oh, were they ever blessed! “See I am setting before you today a blessing and curse- the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I give you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord.” The Lord told them clearly in this book of Deuteronomy. “If you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today- to love the Lord your God and serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will send rain on our land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for the cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.”

No Christians in the history of the world, from the time of Adam to the present age in which we are living were ever given such laws to keep as these people were. If they kept the laws they were blessed with material prosperity. If they did not keep the laws the prosperity would be taken away. Why God did this? Imagine for a moment that the Lord would decide he was going to pick a certain group of Christians in our world to be different from all other people to serve the Lord in a special or even strange way. Let’s say that we were asked to wear certain strange caps at all times, that were bright color like yellow and we agreed to do this for the Lord. Wear the caps and be blessed by the Lord with good jobs, good health, longer life and great prosperity. Not wear them and the blessings would be taken from us. It would be tough to have people look at us and call us “The yellow cap people.” We would find comfort in seeing the Lord bless us richly, but also have joy in knowing we are called to bear witness to Jesus in a special way. The Old Testament laws were intended to be blessing for God’s people. By keeping these laws they showed they

were different from other people. God blessed them and they had an opportunity to talk about one of their descendants who would bless all the people in the world. Staying close to the Words of the Moses in the Old Testament helped them fulfill their task.

God's Word, the Holy Bible has come into your life and woven itself into the very fabric of your being. Because of that Word you can see how blessed you are. "These are written that you might believe and that believing you might have life through his name."

It is great to live in America, to have picnics with our families, to enjoy the blessings of living on the Central Coast, but all these blessings are small compared to what we have come to know through the Bible. From the Bible we know what will someday happen to the world in which we are living. We will have to stand before God and answer to him for the lives we have lived. From the Bible you are blessed to know that your best efforts at doing good only reveal how far you fall short of what God expects. It is in the Bible that you see how blessed you are to be a branch attached to Jesus the Vine and that you are clean through the Word he speaks to you and the precious blood that cleanses you from all sin. You are blessed to take the Bible literally. In times of trouble you find yourself leaning on his promises, clinging to them, and letting give you new direction in life when everything seems confusing. In the Holy Bible you have seen that there is a place waiting for us that is far better than all the best moments of your life put together and distilled into the essence of pure joy.

Jesus summed it all up well when he said, "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." May that blessing be yours, always! Amen.