

Be Exclusive
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Deuteronomy 4

One of the many things I love about my wife is her singular, intentional focus on preparing our kids for life "beyond the nest." She has made it her stated goal to do everything possible to instill values, discipline, and wisdom in Annie and Matt under the heading: "One day we won't always be around and I want to do everything I can to EQUIP them for life." Of course, we pray they will not only have the common sense to live their lives, but that they will REMAIN FOCUSED on and OBEDIENT TO God's commands and their EXCLUSIVE RELATIONSHIP to Him.

Several of the members of our class have already lived that experience of SENDING their CHILD off to college or to another city.

Here's an opening question for discussion:

Think about a PARENT preparing to send that child out into the world on their own. What kind of advice and wisdom might a parent try to impart JUST BEFORE THAT CHILD LEAVES "the nest"?

As we look at Deuteronomy chapter 4, we find Moses and the children of Israel in a very similar situation. Moses was not only their NATIONAL LEADER, he was their SPIRITUAL FATHER.

- He is preparing to send them across the Jordan into the promised land of CANAAN knowing THEY WILL GO WITHOUT HIM.
- He is CONCERNED they will STRAY from their EXCLUSIVE FOCUS on and RELATIONSHIP WITH God.

Let's begin in chapter 4 verses 5-8 of Deuteronomy:

4:5-8...(Moses speaking)

5 See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

6 Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?

8 And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (ESV)

- Verse 5: Moses had DONE HIS JOB as the SPIRITUAL FATHER of the children of Israel. He says "I have done what 'God commanded me' to do. I have taught you his statutes and rules. I have prepared you for this NEW CHAPTER in your life."
- Moses' example applies to you and me in two ways: First, someone WAS MOSES to us and taught US God's statutes and commands to prepare us for life. And WE are to be Moses to OTHERS to teach THEM to be EXCLUSIVELY FOCUSED on God.
- Question: Who was your Moses? Who would you point to that acted as a SPIRITUAL FATHER or MOTHER to YOU; and HOW did they impact your SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?
- Verse 6: Moses says KEEP the commands of God and DO THEM! It's not enough to KNOW the commands of God...we have to DO them!
- Verse 6: What does Moses say we will get by KEEPING God's commands? WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING.
- What IMPACT does he say this will have on OTHER PEOPLE?
- Verse 7: Moses utters a rhetorical question: "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?"
- We don't serve a DISTANT IMPERSONAL God. We serve A PERSONAL LORD AND SAVIOR who has promised to be BE WITH US...and to NEVER LEAVE US.
- We serve a God who is ALWAYS SITTING BY THE PHONE WHEN WE CALL!
- Sometimes we need to remind ourselves just HOW GOOD WE HAVE IT as believers in Christ.
- Verse 8 Moses says that we not only have GOD'S PRESENCE...we have HIS WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS.

What a WINNING COMBINATION WE HAVE FOR LIFE: God's PRESENCE COMBINED WITH His WORD to EQUIP US WITH WHAT WE NEED LIVE OUR LIVES!

You and I need to ask ourselves:

Is my RELATIONSHIP WITH Christ SO VIBRANT and ATTRACTIVE that unbelievers can sense the difference? If not, what changes should I make?

Let's move on verses 9 and 10...Moses says:

9 "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children-

10 how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'

- Moses was afraid that when it came to REMAINING FOCUSED on God and on what they had seen and heard, the children of Israel would come down with SPIRITUAL AMNESIA!
- Question: WHY would Moses have had fears that the Israelites would GET SPIRITUAL AMNESIA when they moved into this strange new land?

- Think about what had happened with the PREVIOUS GENERATION of the Israelites. Why did THAT generation NEVER get to enter the promised land?
- Parents, have you ever had that moment with your kids when they do something so out of character that you want to say: "Have you forgotten EVERYTHING I TAUGHT YOU?"
- "Did your brain spring a leak and all the stuff I taught you ran out?"
- "Do you have AMNESIA?"
- That's what Moses FEARED about his people.
- Verse 9: What does Moses say we should do to PREVENT SPIRITUAL AMNESIA?
- "Take care" and "keep your soul diligently"
- He says: Don't let what I've taught you "depart from your heart."
- If our relationship with God is only HEAD KNOWLEDGE we can FORGET. We have to have God's commands and words IN OUR HEARTS!
- At the end of verse 9: We're not only to STAY FOCUSED EXCLUSIVELY on God's commands. WHAT ELSE ARE WE to do? Pass them on to our CHILDREN and THEIR CHILDREN.
- Not only our physical children but our SPIRITUAL CHILDREN...those we're called to DISCIPLE.

A thought: Believers in Christ are not to "park at the well of God's LIVING WATER and drink" for ourselves...we're supposed to "post signs" to show others how to FIND THAT WELL."

15 "Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. Since you saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire,
 16 beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,
 17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air,
 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth.
 19 And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

- Verse 15: Moses says "WATCH OUT" "Since you saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you...out of the midst of the fire."

In Exodus 19:9...

And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever."

- God had Moses assemble all the Israelites at the foot of Mt. Horeb and God spoke to them from a "thick cloud"

- Since God had not come that day in a form they could see, Moses is concerned they may be SUSCEPTIBLE to worshipping CARVED IDOLS, or the MOON AND THE STARS.
- When we're not able to keep our focus on the GOD OF THE BIBLE we are SUSCEPTIBLE to worshipping idols...either idols WE CREATE or that someone else INFLUENCES us to worship.
- Back to a parent sending out their child to a distant place. Question: Why would a parent be concerned that their child might slip away from their walk with the Lord because they are in another city?
- The fear is that when they are not SURROUNDED BY the influence of the family, they may be SUSCEPTIBLE to either CREATE THEIR OWN IDOLS to worship or to be INFLUENCED by their surroundings and friends to worship SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE ONE TRUE GOD.
- It's all about CONTINUED FOCUS on God and our relationship with Him.
- Here's an example: There's a lot of JUSTIFIED CONCERN about TEXTING WHILE DRIVING. It's a DANGEROUS practice.
- Question: If I decide to text while I drive...does it make me forget how to drive? I mean literally, does picking up my smart phone while driving cause me to FORGET WHAT I KNOW ABOUT DRIVING? Then why is it DANGEROUS?
- It's the DISTRACTION. I still KNOW WHAT I KNOW...I'm just DISTRACTED from FOCUSING ON IT.

Thought: The less I'm surrounded by the people and things that keep me FOCUSED on my relationship with God, the more likely I am to be DISTRACTED by IDOLS.

- Those idols that can distract us may even be good things like career, family , relationships, hobbies, even church work.
- Remember, we ALL worship something...the question is whether we'll worship the ONE TRUE GOD. We won't if we allow our selves to DRIVE THROUGH LIFE DISTRACTED.

So HOW DO WE KEEP THAT FROM HAPPENING?

39 know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

40 Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

- God is God and "there is no other"
- Engrave that on your heart...keep his statutes and commandments
- And here is one of those CONDITIONAL promises God makes with us His people:
- Do THIS and God will do THAT.
- Stay focused on God...keep His statutes and commands...and it will "go well with you and your children after you" and God will "prolong" our days...beyond this earth, into all eternity.

So, What's the TAKEAWAY?

- We should continuously learn and live by God's ways even when challenged by new circumstances...DISTRACTIONS.
- We should love God exclusively and teach His ways to our families and upcoming generations.
- We should be careful to keep God as first priority in our lives and avoid all forms of idolatry.
- We should demonstrate our love for God by obeying Him and affirming His lordship over our lives every day.