

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 12



DAY
1

The Word of the Lord Deuteronomy 31:9-13

Jews and Christians are both known as people of the Book. That is a compliment. The Book, of course, is the Bible—for the Jews the Old Testament and for Christians the Old and New Testaments.

The Old Testament consists of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The historical books are considered as part of the prophetic words, as much of their history is the history of prophets speaking to God's people.

The Bible is God's revelation to us. That means God has taken the initiative to reveal his Word, his will, his ways, and his truth to us. We did not discover it on our own. We could not discover it on our own. It had to be revealed or given to us.

The Bible means God *speaks*. That is an act of love and grace. God's Word brings creation into existence, and it sustains all life (Genesis 1; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 11:3). Spiritual life comes from God's Word. Jesus has the words of eternal life (John 6:63, 68). Your spiritual life depends on the powerful words of Jesus making you alive (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Deuteronomy is the Word of the Lord. We do not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:3). We are to follow carefully all the words of the Lord (Deuteronomy 17:19; 28:58; 31:12).

Deuteronomy is the Will of the Lord provided in specific and concrete ways. There are the 10 commandments, which are the foundation and framework of God's will. There are hundreds of other laws, commands, prohibitions, and instructions that guide God's people in living a life that is fully aligned with their God.

Above all, the Bible is the Word of God for our salvation. That Word becomes increasingly clear as the centuries pass, and then finds fulfillment in Christ. (Read 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Hebrews 1:1-2).

How often do you read the Bible?

How much do you desire to reorder your life according to the Bible's teaching?

DAY
2

A People of the Word(s) Deuteronomy 5-6

These two chapters are central to the book and to being the people of God. Chapter 5 is the 10 Commandments (also see Exodus 20) and the people's response to those commandments. Pay close attention to 5:23-29. God wants your heart inclined to fear him and keep his commandments. The role of Moses as teacher is described (5:31) and there is a final powerful instruction (5:32).

Chapter 6 has the famous Shema (Hear, O Israel). It is a strong statement on the nature of God and the natural love, obedience, and worship that is due to such a God (6:3, 4-6, 12, 13-19).

Equally important is the need to pass the ways and Word of the Lord on to the generations that follow (6:7-9, 20-25).

There are three overlapping themes that define the response of God's people to his Word. We 1) hear and listen; 2)

obey, follow, keep; and 3) love and worship. Put all this together and it is the fear of the Lord, or a proper reverence and respect for our God and his ways.

It begins with you and me taking the time and making it a priority to hear and listen to God's Word. That means we read the Bible. We do devotional work. We listen to messages about the Bible. This is the input phase that comes to a heart that is ready.

Then we respond to God's Word. Even when it is hard and, perhaps, most urgently, WHEN it is hard. God's Word will be in opposition to the cultural ideals and values. We have a choice every time we hear God's Word. Will we obey and follow God's will?

As we choose to do that, there is another dynamic that happens. In the choice to listen and obey, we choose to love God. We choose to worship God. Love and worship together are the highest form of obedience. It is holy obedience that comes from deep within.

What is your daily practice to listen and hear, to follow and obey, and to love and worship God?

DAY
3

Hear the Word of the Lord Jeremiah 7:1-29

The prophets had a daunting challenge. God spoke to them and they were to speak the Word of the Lord to the people. The problem was that the people did not listen to God. The people had disobeyed God at every point. They refused the Word of God and they rejected the God who spoke to them.

God had warned them about this very thing. God warned them of what would happen if they fell into idolatry and if they became a people who were unholy and unjust.

God's will for humanity is beautiful. It is for life together in peace, joy, righteousness, compassion, justice, and so much more. But we don't listen to God and we go our own way, doing what we want to do. We then reap what we sow. If you do what is wrong, bad things will happen (Galatians 6:7-8).

In love, God sent the prophets to repeat the warnings and to call the people to return to the ways of the Lord. 2 Chronicles 7:14 is one of the famous invitations from God to repent and return. God wants to bless his people and bless the nations. That means we must walk in the ways of God for that blessing.

Micah 6:8 is another core verse that summarizes all of Deuteronomy. Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God. That is the first great command, to love God, and the second, to love your neighbor.

In Exodus, three times it says Pharaoh would not listen to what the Lord said. In Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people their core problem is that they would not listen (Deuteronomy 1:43).

God's Word is powerful, true, and life-changing. We must learn to love God's Word and listen to it. Psalm 119 is the longest psalm and it is devoted to cultivating the right attitude toward God's Word.

What were the sober insights you found in Jeremiah 7?

Read Psalm 119 as a prayer. Use it to shape your own attitude toward God's Word.

DAY
4

Jesus, the Word of God Matthew 7:28-29, 22:29; John 8:31-32; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Read each of the passages and make a few notes about what you learn about Jesus and the Word.

In the Sermon on the Mount, there is a parallel of Jesus and Moses. Just as Moses went up to the mountain to get the law of God, Jesus on the mountain gives the fulfilling of God's law. As Moses is the teacher of Israel, Jesus is the new teacher. Read Matthew 4:23-25 to see the context for Jesus' sermon. In the sermon, read 5:17-20. In these verses, Jesus establishes himself as the fulfillment (not the abolishment) of God's Old Testament words.

Jesus taught with authority and with integrity. Jesus spoke the truth and he spoke it without compromise. Jesus identified a

major problem that afflicts us: We don't know the truth and we don't know the power of God. They are woven together. Jesus tells us the truth will set us free. And Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" and the only way to the Father God (John 14:6).

One of the wisest things you will ever do about the words and teaching of Jesus is to imitate Peter, James, and John. When Jesus was transfigured (Matthew 17:1-4), a voice came from heaven: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him" (17:5)! That is what Deuteronomy teaches us. Listen to God. Listen to Jesus, the Word of God. And then love and worship Jesus. "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15).

In many ways, the Christian faith is very simple. Jesus is Immanuel, God with us, the Son of God and the Word of God. God with us to save us. So, listen to Jesus daily. Trust, follow, and obey Jesus daily. As you do, this is how you love Jesus.

What is stirring in your heart as you meditate on these scriptural truths?

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP CONVERSATION

As a group, spend a few minutes just catching up. How was your week? Where did you experience God this week? As a group, how can you celebrate the goodness of God on behalf of one another? Is there anyone in your group who needs comfort?

ONE: In what ways has your appreciation for the Bible increased as you did the devotions for this week? Do you think you value the Bible as much as you need to? What are one or two ideas or verses that really spoke to you? How will the words of God become increasingly valuable to you in 2023?

TWO: Some self-assessment.

- How often do you read the Bible?
- How much of the Bible do you read when you read it?
- How do you listen for the specific words of God as you read the Bible?
- Do you have confidence that you are able to understand the Bible?
- How often do you find ways to immediately make life adjustments to what you have just learned from God?

THREE: It has been said by many observers that Christians in the United States don't know their Bible very well. They don't read their Bibles very often. They don't understand what they read. And they don't do much to realign their lifestyle with God's Word. Then we wonder, why isn't the Christian life working for us? Why isn't God doing more in my life? Why doesn't God answer my prayers? As a group, talk about this paragraph, and don't talk about it in terms of other people. Talk about it in light of your own Christian way of life.

FOUR: True or False: *My obedience to God's Word is irrelevant for my Christian life. I am saved by grace. That's all I need.* Discuss and defend your thoughts in group conversation.

FIVE: True or False: *God's Word is just too hard to obey. It is not reasonable for me to reorder my lifestyle around the teaching of the Bible.* Discuss and defend your thoughts in group conversation.