

Read Deuteronomy 1

The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Deut 1:6 The NCAA does not allow college championships to be held in Mississippi because their flag contains elements of the confederate flag. Some see it as a picture of racism while others see it a reminder of the state's history. I've always believed that it's important never to forget that chapter of our history, to ensure that we never return there, though I'm not sure if a confederate patch within the state flag really makes the point one way or the other.

In this chapter, Moses lays out the history of Israel. He doesn't hold anything back, but gives both the good and bad details. As he does so, he shows that there were many elements that should have allowed Israel to have success the first time that they came to the promised land. Moses chose wise leaders and judges over the people. He sent spies into the land to verify the word of the Lord regarding their new home. However, all those opportunities were eliminated by the choices of the people. Moses is showing them they have exactly the same choice now. They needed to remember the failures of the past and work for future success. **What failures are in your past? Maybe a divorce or separation. Perhaps you've ignored the Lord for many years, despite professing to be a Christian. It doesn't matter what it is, as long as you seek to be different now. The life of a Christian is made known by the actions of the person. Christ saves us, and leads us to make different decisions than we normally would on our own. Give yourself to Him today. Remember your past, not so you live in guilt, but in order to avoid those mistakes. Remember how you felt and the separation you felt from the Lord. Seek to never enter that place again.**

Read Deuteronomy 2

For the LORD your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing. Deut 2:7 Mark Driscoll, pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, once preached regarding the prosperity preaching of Joel Osteen and others. These ministers tell you that you are to have blessed relationships, never experience pain, and have an abundance of everything. Driscoll points out that not even Jesus had those things. He had many strained and difficult relationships, He certainly experienced pain, and being born to a poor family, He didn't have an abundance of anything from a material standpoint. However, the Lord always provided for His human needs, and He does the same for us when times are difficult. You may be experiencing a job loss or family difficulty of some kind. In the midst of that, God is still faithful to provide us with what we need. God says you won't lack, but doesn't say that you will have an unnecessary abundance of things.

God gives this message to the children of Israel. They have grown up to be the adults that go into the promised land. Moses has been giving them a history lesson, and reminding them that God never took His hand off of them. They needed to learn those lessons so they could avoid repeating them. **How satisfied are you with the provision of God? Do**

you find yourself dissatisfied? It may be that God is attempting to protect you in some way through the provision that He gives. Many people have hoped for a little more money, and once they received it, have found new problems created in their lives. If you don't lack for anything that you need, praise the Lord. If you do lack, ask Him for the provision and examine your life. It may not be that you lack, but you're hoping for something beyond your daily bread. Perhaps some disobedience is causing Him to withhold in order that you make the connection between your disobedience and your personal situation as a result.

Read Deuteronomy 3

'Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you.' Deut 3:22 If God has set out a course for your life, He is the one who does the work. However, we still must be obedient to see it accomplished. When I first started getting serious about sharing my faith, I still had the fear that many believers seem to experience. We find ourselves fearful that perhaps we will be laughed at or ridiculed for our attempts. After considering this worry for some time, I finally understood what's really going on when I share the gospel with people. If someone says "no" to the gospel, they aren't rejecting me...they are rejecting Jesus. The work of the gospel is truly in the Lord's hands, and we honor that work through obedience to share.

It's the same situation in many areas of life. We do the work, but ultimately we have to leave the final result with the Lord. I teach my kids how to know and honor the Lord, but I ask the Lord to make Himself known to them. Or when the news looks bleak, I remember that God is not empowered or defeated by circumstances. It comes down to trust. We can be obedient to pray, and be used by the Lord, but our battles belong to Him. **Are you willing and able to trust the Lord in this way? Do you find yourself anxious as you wait on a patient God to handle your situations? I've been there before, but when you attempt to rush a situation that the Lord is dealing with slowly, you never get God's best for you. Trust Him, wait on His time, and remember that He has not forgotten you, or your concerns.**

Read Deuteronomy 4

For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. Deut 4:24 I have been a Missouri Tiger basketball fan for many years. We've had many close calls with greatness, but more shortfalls than anything. As a teenager, I remember that when tournament time came around we either we're barely out or barely in. After losing our first game in the tournament, many people said I should root for Kansas, because they are in the same conference and area of the country. One problem with that...I don't care about our conference. Kansas is the enemy and I wouldn't root for them if they were all Christians (and Southern Baptists at that!). I root for Missouri, or for no one!

This may be a trivial example to you, but it works for my point. Moses continues to walk the people down memory lane, and now begins to talk to them about obeying the commandments that were broken before. He makes the statement that God is a

consuming fire and a jealous God. God desires to consume evil among His people, and has shown that He will take drastic steps to keep evil from among the people (remember Korah's rebellion against Moses in the desert?). And what does it mean that God is a jealous God? He wants the same respect from us that He shows us. God is jealously protective and concerned about His people. He loves all people, but only works good for those who belong to Him. In the same way, we should be concerned and focused on God. We root for God and for no one and nothing else. His jealousy is sparked by people who split their attention between God and something else. **Do you want God to divide His attention from you? I know that I don't. Do you serve God jealously? Are you one to resist distractions that attempt to take you away from the Lord? If not, God will be prepared to take drastic measures in order to restore you to working order in the kingdom, even if it's difficult and hurts a bit. A statement that I can't get out of my head is that "God doesn't want you happy, as much as He wants you holy."**

Read Deuteronomy 5

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day. Deut 5:15 Sixth grade basketball was a learning experience. I knew that we were always told that once we cross the half-court line to keep going forward. One particular day, I dribbled across the half-court line and my defender started to really get aggressive. In my rush to escape, I dribbled backwards across the line and our coach blew the whistle. It turned out that once you cross that line, you can't cross it again or the other team gets the ball. We were told not to do it, but I didn't realize it had those kind of consequences. It was information I lacked on the rule

As Moses has been giving a history lesson, he comes to repeating the 10 commandments. We see a bit more information on the Sabbath at this time. Moses is just retelling what God told him. However, now we see that the Sabbath is also for remembering that they were rescued from Egypt. Why didn't Moses share that the first time? Perhaps because it wasn't written on the tablets, and Moses wanted them to get the commandments down first. But now Moses is explaining the Sabbath in greater detail, and giving them more information to help them avoid the mistakes of their parents. **What information do you feel you lack? You know the church says to give, but do you know why? You know you should pray, but do you know why? It's often not the rules we lack, but the understanding for them. Ask God for the understanding. When you see His heart and why God approves and disapproves certain things, you will follow Him more closely. It's the reason kids ask "Why" all the time. They're not challenging authority, but just trying to understand the reasoning of the authority. Don't be afraid to ask God "Why". Rules you understand, you're more likely to keep. Seek to understand the "Why" of being faithful in your marriage, family, workplace or school.**

Read Deuteronomy 6

You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. Deut 6:7 When I was in high school, I didn't mind having substitute teachers for certain classes. Some were boring and I knew that we would probably just watch a video or read. However, I took a lot of agriculture classes that I did like, so having a substitute on those days was a letdown. Our regular teacher would assign work for us to complete on days he was gone. And what happened if you had a real question? Nothing. The substitute would walk over, look at it, look at the teacher notes, and then tell us to ask the regular teacher when he came back. It was basically a wasted day and wasted opportunity for us to learn the subjects we were studying.

One area you cannot afford wasted days and opportunities is with your children. Maybe you have children, maybe they're out of the house, or maybe you're not there yet. In any case, it's important that you realize that children of all ages need guidance. The reason that so many children never embrace the faith of their parents is because there were mixed messages. Moses tells the people to teach their children diligently about the Lord. Not just at church, but at home, in the car, on the ball field, anywhere you are with your child. I often find chances to give my children a spiritual lesson when we're doing something simple. **Are you a diligent teacher? Do you take every opportunity to teach your child spiritual things or do you leave that work to the church? A couple hours a week will never change a child, but a lifetime of learning about the Lord, will cause a change. We're not trying to change their behavior, but to lead them to a relationship with Jesus Christ. He will change their behavior and save them from their sins. Is the message in your home consistently about Christ? Or do you allow too many ungodly things to influence your children (their choice of music, magazines, movies, etc)? If you are a teenager, seek out spiritual guidance from your parents before going to a youth pastor.**

Read Deuteronomy 7

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples Deut 7:7 I remember a kid in Jr. High named Nathan. Nathan apparently lived the Cosby Show in real life; his dad was a doctor and his mom was a lawyer. As a result, Nathan had everything he wanted, and a few things he probably didn't want but took anyway. He always had a new pair of the most expensive shoes. He had the coolest clothes before anyone else. Nathan walked around like he was the most popular person in school, and to a degree he was. But what made Nathan? His stuff. Take all that away from him and what did you have. A guy who was defined by his stuff.

Sometimes as Christians, I think we begin to act a bit like Nathan. We start to think that we're better than people who may be living together instead of being married, or we think we're better than the drunk who can't quit the bottle, or we think we're better than the screaming family in the house next door. **But, do you know who you're better than? No one. The only thing I can point to of value in my life, is my relationship with Jesus Christ. Because of Him, I am the man I am today, and I wouldn't and couldn't**

be this man without Him. As Christians, we must realize that we are different because of Jesus primarily. I believe the spiritual health of my family is a direct blessing of my personal relationship with Jesus. Why do we have fighting families in the church? Because they don't allow Jesus to be at the center of their family in their home. Put Jesus at the center of everything you do. Then all aspects of your life will revolve around Him: your speech, your attitudes, your efforts. Remember, the only one that causes a difference in your life and keeps you from the gutter, is Jesus Christ. He gets the credit for our lives, not us.

Read Deuteronomy 8

He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD Deut 8:3 This is the first scripture we see Jesus use in Matthew 4 to combat Satan's attempts to lure Jesus into sin. Even though Jesus is hungry after fasting for forty days, He says the most important thing to sustain life is not bread, but the Word of God. Does that mean it is unimportant to eat? Not at all, but this is a Scripture all about priorities.

When the previous Israelites got to the promised land, their priorities got mixed up. They trusted themselves more than the Lord. We have to watch our priorities at all times; they can betray us. The founder of McDonald's, Ray Krock, was asked by a reporter what he believed in. "I believe in God, my family and McDonald's," he said. Then he added, "When I get to the office, I reverse the order." The challenge for us as Christians is to never reverse our order of priorities. Even when we face difficulties, we give ourselves completely to the Lord and trust Him in the good and bad times. The reason so many cannot trust Him in the bad times, is that they really trust themselves during the good times. **Do you live by the Word of God? Is Jesus your first priority? If He is, your life will be one of obedience, sharing of the gospel, asking forgiveness when you make mistakes, and love. Are you honoring God for your life, both when things are good and bad? Remember that He often teaches us more in the "bad" times, as the difficulty leads us to greater faith in our great God.**

Read Deuteronomy 9

Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people. Deut 9:6 I served a church in seminary as a youth pastor that had few teenagers when I arrived. That changed after a while and we often had our "herd" moving through the church during our activities. One day I saw a long-time adult member, snatch the hat off a teenager's head, and refuse to give it back. I walked over and asked why she had done that. "He needs to show respect in the church and not wear a hat." I said "When the pastor, chairman of deacons, or one of the other grown men in church wear their hats in to the sanctuary, do you do that to them?" Of course she didn't, but continued to insist the teenager was wrong, despite her own double standard. She was being stubborn and I needed to stay cool or I would only worsen the situation.

You have to make a determination in your heart right now Christian...how are you going to deal with stubborn people? You don't have to be rude or insensitive, but you may need to be direct. Sometimes hurt feelings in the church don't come from what people say, but what is left unsaid. **However, you also need to consider your own stubbornness. Has the Lord ever convicted you of sin that you were hesitant to deal with? Have you known you should have a quiet time, but delayed? As imperfect people of God, we are often stubborn against the things of the Lord. So if someone in your church seems stubborn, remember your own stubbornness first. As you talk, ask them their spiritual reasons for their positions. If they have none, then you know what you're dealing with. If they use sound arguments and Scripture, back up for a moment and reconsider if you haven't been the stubborn one. Stubbornness doesn't lead to church growth, but to church death.**

Read Deuteronomy 10

You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. Deut 10:20 Have you ever had a waiter who was around too much? Recently my family and I went out to eat at a place that was not McDonald's (praise the Lord!). The waiter was constantly at our table topping off drinks that were barely drunk from, checking to see if we needed something, and just constantly around. I remarked to Nikki that I would like a little less service. Then I got to thinking about that. The last time in the same restaurant I had wanted a better server. My tea ran out, I had to wait too long for the check, etc. If I had to choose between the two, I would prefer my tea filled and needs met.

If these servers were a picture of Christians, which one would God want? He wouldn't want the one that you have to yell out "Miss...Sir...could I get some more tea?" God wants the guy who brings the sweet tea without being asked (ok I'm assuming God as a sweet tea drinker...I also assume Him as a Missouri Tiger fan). Do you get what Moses is saying above? God doesn't just want people who respect and fear Him and serve Him out of duty, but out of love. We serve and cling to those we love, like a spouse or child. **The question isn't if you serve God, but do you cling to Him? Many people probably consider themselves a good servant, but they don't cling. I don't remain committed to Jesus because He washed away my sins, or because He is taking me to Heaven one day, or even because He leads my life. I remain committed to Him because I love Him. No one in my life has shown such love, care, and interest in my life as Jesus has. All the other benefits are just benefits of being in a love relationship with the Son of God. God loved us first. Let's love Him back as we serve and cling to Him.**

Read Deuteronomy 11

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse Deut 11:26 Have you ever heard the old expression "One man's trash is another man's treasure"? If you don't believe me, go to a yard sale or spend five minutes on eBay. When we had our yard sale before moving to seminary, I couldn't believe the "trash" people bought from us. And I'm

thoroughly convinced that half of everything on eBay is stuff that people were going to throw away and then said "You know what, somebody will give me 5 bucks for this." It's just really surprising how one person can value something as worthless, and then the right person comes along and finds it to be highly valuable.

This passage in Deuteronomy 11 is very similar. When Moses says he setting before the people a blessing and a curse, he's talking about the same thing...the commandments. If you look at them as valuable and live your life according to them, there is a blessing that will come on your life from obedience (as a believer). But, if you look at them as outdated or something that a Christian today doesn't need to worry about, you will experience a curse from your disobedience. **How do you view the commandments of the Lord? Not just the 10 commandments, but the others contained all throughout Scripture: the command to evangelize (Matthew 28:19-20), the command to love one another (John 15:12), and various others. Do you seriously consider your need to be obedient, or do you fail in these things and claim the Lord made you as you are? God doesn't make trash...He makes treasure. God's people are a treasured possession to Him (Deut 26:18, Psalm 83:3). Let's live as treasure for the Lord, and not as trash.**

Read Deuteronomy 12

Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it. Deut 12:32 Charles Spurgeon must have been reading my mind. I recently found this quote from him regarding legalism: "I have found, in my own spiritual life, that the more rules I lay down for myself, the more sins I commit. The habit of regular morning and evening prayer is one which is indispensable to a believer's life, but the prescribing of the length of prayer, and the constrained remembrance of so many persons and subjects, may gender unto bondage, and strangle prayer rather than assist it. " The Bible tells us how to pray, and the power we're to pray in, and the name to pray in, but says nothing of the length.

In this chapter, the Lord has laid many rules out to be relayed through Moses. And why do we have rules or commandments? Because it helps the people who try to draw lines in the sand figure out which lines to draw regarding what they will and won't do. It also helps those who like to draw extra lines in the sand, to see that those are not God's lines. **Spurgeon is talking about guilt a lot of Christians face. How long do I pray? Did I pray for everyone and everybody? I've seen people who keep a weekly journal and pray for different people on different days. Pray as the Lord leads you. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you prayers. The Bible says nothing of the length of your prayer, but the nature. As you grow in your prayer life, you'll find that it will lengthen naturally. If you're experiencing guilt or conviction ask yourself: "Who's rules did I break.... mine or the Lord's?" We can be pretty quick to add rules to our self. Let's remember the ones the Lord gave us to keep us not just from sin, but from a weak and powerless relationship with Him.**

Read Deuteronomy 13

Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt. Deut 13:16 The insurance industry was rocked by a huge lawsuit in 1999. State Farm was sued because it used after market parts to repair vehicles that were damaged in crashes. After market parts are often rebuilt parts that have been restored, or similar parts not made by the original manufacturer. I worked for another company and was shocked that State Farm was doing this, until I found out my company did the same thing. The lawsuit changed the insurance industry as many companies had to replace previous work with brand new parts. Even though many after market parts worked well, people weren't happy with the idea they might be using rebuilt parts.

Someone else was unhappy with the thought of a rebuild in this passage...the Lord. The people are being sufficiently warned about going after and worshipping other gods. God doesn't say He is going to destroy a city that is rampant with this sin, but that fellow Israelites had to go in and destroy the city, never to rebuild it. This was for a couple reasons. First, the rubble was a great reminder to those who passed by, and secondly God doesn't want any mixture of unrighteousness with righteousness. It seems these rebuilt cities would have been an abomination to Him. **I ask, do you destroy sinful strongholds in your life? If you know certain friends are causing you to sin, stop being around them. If being in a certain place causes you to sin, eliminate it (this could be your workplace, your computer, your television). God is very serious about idolatry. If there is something causing you to sin, and you refuse to eliminate it, that's idolatry...placing something of value higher than God. And for goodness sakes, if some sin is has been demolished in your life, don't go rebuilding it later!**

Read Deuteronomy 14

You shall not eat anything which dies of itself. You may give it to the alien who is in your town, so that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk. Deut 14:21 After I was cut from my high school baseball team, do you know what I never did? I never went to practice anymore. I never went over and ran with the team, or hit in drills, or practiced fielding with the team. Why? Because I wasn't on the team. The coaches were devoted to their players and wouldn't have just let anyone and everyone on the field, because they needed time to work with their players. At the same time, coaches never called guys onto the field to run that weren't part of the team. They never saw guys watching and made them run laps or sprints or anything else. Because they weren't on the team.

Here Moses lays out the dietary restrictions again for Israel. There are various reasons why the Lord chose these animals, which we have covered before. But, we have an interesting note in verse 21 that if any Israelites have these animals, they can give it to a foreigner to eat. Why would this be? Because those people are not of God's people and

have no restrictions. Yes a non-Christian is guilty if they break the Lord's commandments, but are they any more lost? No. A lost person will act like a lost person, because they're on a different team. Often times, Christians expect lost people to act saved. We want drunks to be sober, homosexuals to be straight, and various other changes, because we as Christians don't do those things. The problem is, that we cannot expect changes out of people who have not given their lives to Jesus. **Are you expecting the lost to act like the saved? People who act are people who go to Hell, because they act saved at church, and never come to the realization that they have no relationship with Jesus. If you have a friend, family member or someone close who is making ungodly choices, don't just encourage them to stop. Encourage them to accept Jesus, and His power to help them change. We can't expect people who aren't on God's team to go through the motions.**

Read Deuteronomy 15

You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. Deut 15:10 Think of one of your favorite purchases and one of your least favorite. My favorite purchase of all time was the engagement ring I purchased for my wife. I looked at all sorts of diamonds before I found the exact one I wanted. I sacrificed size for quality, but she's always loved it (or so she assures me), and I loved giving it to her. Apart from salvation, it was one of the most exciting moments of my life to give her that ring and hear her say yes. Least favorite purchase...how about tires. I drove back and forth for 3 hours a day for nearly two years while I went to seminary. Needless to say, tires were a constant source of headaches. And I don't like to buy the cheapest tires, because I don't like being stuck on the side of the road changing a tire.

What is the difference between these two purchases? One my heart was totally in, and one I just had to do. God is trying to change the attitudes of His people in how they give. Not only were they to give of their wealth to the Lord, but also to generously give to help their brothers. Not to make money off credit, but to simply give. Do you know what God was asking for control of? Not of their wealth, but of their hearts. God wanted His people to be completely given to Him on this issue. Sure today, it might be you helping someone else, but tomorrow it could be someone else helping you. **Who owns your pocketbook? It's probably who owns your heart. So many are unwilling to give to the Lord through the church offering, but they're not unwilling to purchase season tickets to their favorite team. There is nothing wrong with purchasing things you like, unless your heart reveals you are more inclined towards worldly things. Are you generous not just with the Lord, but with others? Do you seek ways you can help those in need around you? Not just to give randomly, but to give with the intention of sharing the gospel. I told someone recently that our church helped financially "This money will be gone next month, but you have the opportunity to change your life for eternity", and then I shared the gospel with her. Let God own your heart, and He will set your entire life in order.**

Read Deuteronomy 16

You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), so that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. Deut. 16:3

There are some things we should never forget. Our anniversary would be an important one. I've been married for 11 years at the time of this writing. Never once have I forgotten my anniversary or even come close. Usually I start thinking about it a couple months before because I know it's coming up. Now if I told you my wife never started dropping hints, I'd be lying. But, it's an important time in our marriage, because without that wedding date, there would be no anniversary dates. Do you know why I remember it? Not because I have to get her a present (which I'm awful at by the way). Not because I'm trying to spare her feelings. I remember our anniversary because I love my wife. I'm blessed to be in this marriage with someone that suffered a temporary moment of insanity as she married below her level and allowed me to marry above mine.

Here in Deuteronomy 16 the people were called upon to remember the initial salvation when God brought them out of Egypt. The continual feasts were markers, or anniversaries, of thankfulness to the Lord as well. Believers in Jesus Christ should also celebrate spiritual anniversaries. Your salvation should be something you recall often, because you're sharing it with others. People who get hazy on the details of their salvation, don't share it enough. But, there are other anniversaries I remember also. The first time I really led someone to the Lord. The first time I knew that God was calling me into the ministry (or whatever He has called you to do, inside or outside of the ministry). These are spiritual markers to be remembered. First of all, to praise the Lord. Don't take for granted the work He has done in your in the past. But, also remember so you can encourage others. The encouragement of others led me to Jesus, to share my faith, and to pray about the ministry. **Are you thankful for spiritual anniversaries? Do you sometimes just thank the Lord for the fact that He saved you? Do you thank Him for people who came into your life and led you in the right direction? Most importantly, are you passing on those lessons to other Christians in your circle of influence? We are the body of Christ, and we must come together to help one another in the struggles that come from living in a world that celebrates no spiritual markers.**

Read Deuteronomy 17

The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Deut 17:7 It is interesting to note in this chapter, that God declares Israel will ask for a king, well before they do so in 1 Samuel. However, for application let's take a look at another aspect of this chapter. When I was in high school, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to be. I liked to argue, and a teacher encouraged me to take a mock trial class. We had real cases, with people giving the real testimony as it had been given on the stand. One case seemed open and shut, and as the prosecutor I had the guilty verdict I was looking for. Our teachers, the judges, stopped the trial and told us we needed to go over

everything again, because we were about to falsely imprison someone. We had to look over everything again, and found a key piece of evidence tucked away in a small testimony that we had ignored before. It was the piece in real life that brought about the correct verdict.

Obviously God led Israel to take drastic measures in the early days of the nation. To prevent the country from staying into sin, every person who chose sin consistently and deliberately had to be put to death. But notice that the first stone had to be thrown by the witnesses who gave the testimony that condemned the person. This is the real story behind Jesus later telling the Pharisees that the one without sin could cast the first stone at the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). When they all threw their stones down, they were admitting they weren't witnesses to the act, and that she was falsely accused. **Do you falsely accuse people of wrongdoing? If you repeat gossip, you can be doing just that. If you accuse someone of wrongdoing because of your disagreements, you are falsely accusing them. We need to understand that our "testimony" is not just the experience we had with Jesus. It's everything since that time as well, and our daily words are a testimony of our Lord. If people can't trust you to tell the truth in everyday situations, how can they believe you when you share the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ? Choose to be a person of truth and keep silent when you're not sure of it.**

Read Deuteronomy 18

When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. Deut 18:22 I don't mind pointing out false teachers among us. One of those false teachers who has disturbed me for a long time is Benny Hinn. Too many people get credited as telling the truth because they have a TV show. A video I recently watched put together some of Hinn's most famous "prophecies" including the fact that: "The Spirit tells me, Fidel Castro will die in the 90's", "The Lord tells me to tell you in the mid-90's, about 94 or 95, no later than that, God will destroy the homosexual community of America", "Jesus is going to physically appear in these meetings (in Nairobi, Kenya)...I may very well come back with footage of Jesus on the platform."

God gives one of the clearest declarations here in Deuteronomy 18 regarding how to evaluate the message of a messenger, be it a prophet, Sunday School teacher, or pastor. If someone says something is going to happen, then evaluate to see if it happens. If something doesn't happen, then the Bible says you shall not be afraid of a prophet who gives a false message. That means to pay no heed to his warnings about judgment or blessings. **Who do you listen to? Are you listening to those who say something will happen, but they're sometimes wrong? Who are the teachers who influence you? There are many out there, proclaiming to preach the Word of God. Follow their sermons in the Word for yourself. Determine if what they are saying is true. You don't have to be a Bible scholar to be able to say that someone is wrong. Too many**

people in churches have floored me with the teachers they gave their ears (and their money) to. Watch that you are giving your ear to God's messengers.

Read Deuteronomy 19

Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Deut 19:21 The justice system in our country certainly has its share of detractors. Despite being an excellent model, an element of it often causes confusion and anger. Why does someone who commits a murder get a shorter sentence than someone who embezzles money, or molests a child, or any number of other offenses? While I think that all crimes should be punished, it seems that our country has become too willing to negotiate terms with those who take a life. God set forth that there is to be an ultimate punishment and accountability for life. For a person be punished in the way he "punished" his victim seems a fair judgment for his actions.

The death penalty was certainly on the table with those who committed murders. And the cities of refuge earlier in the chapter, as well as the command for multiple witnesses, shows they didn't pass judgment quickly or lightly. Many Christians now point to Matthew 5:38-41 as a mandate against the death penalty, but it is not. Jesus mentions this passage of eye for an eye, and then says "Don't resist an evil person." He mentions being slapped, having something taken from you, or being forced to work. Jesus is saying that not every situation is "eye for an eye". If your life is not being threatened (like the examples Jesus gives), a Christian is to be willing to take persecution for the sake of the lost person. If someone sees you are willing to love them even when they hate you, it can impact that person's life. **What kind of person are you? Do you try to get even with everyone who wrongs you? Someone says something about you, so you say something about them, whether it's true or not? Do you provoke fights in order to set people straight? God lays out that there are times that an ultimate punishment must be enforced. There are other times we need to love the people that hate us, and in doing so, share the Gospel. Jesus loved us before we ever thought about loving Him.**

Read Deuteronomy 20

so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God Deut 20:18 During my college days, I had a co-worker who constantly invited me to his weekend parties. He knew I was a Christian, and that I didn't drink, but he said he would have everything there I needed. After much persistence, he finally got me to come one night, and when I got there people were everywhere in this little college-town house. There was a mountain dew bottle with my name on it, unopened, so I grabbed it and a piece of pizza. When I sat down for a moment and looked around I knew I was in the wrong place. The music was horrible and not worth listening to, people were clearly already losing their ability to make wise decisions due to the alcohol and not a few people were passed out. A couple people tried talking to me, but it was like we were on two different planets. Do you know how many times I shared Christ at that party? Zero. It

wasn't an environment that you could even seriously talk about Jesus, yet I hear teenagers say that's why they think they should go to alcohol parties. I didn't influence that group, but there was a much greater danger of them influencing me.

When you have that many people making wrong choices, it makes the temptation all the greater. God recognizes this as His people are beginning to look at their conquest of the promised land. He says that if any of the inhabitants remain, Israel will be the pupils and not the teachers, and they will bow to the false gods of these lands. **Do you truly teach others about Christ or are you influenced more by the lost? Sometimes we have great ideas about what we should have said, but they never get said to the people who need to hear it. We live in the world, not of it, and we have a responsibility to share the truth. We also have a responsibility to deny the lie and help others to do the same through Jesus. Are you an influencer or one who is influenced?**

Read Deuteronomy 21

then it shall be in the day he wills what he has to his sons, he cannot make the son of the loved the firstborn before the son of the unloved , who is the firstborn. Deut 21:16 This can certainly be a difficult chapter. You see a man taking a woman captive in battle, and then deciding he really doesn't want her. It speaks of a man trying to make the son of his most-loved wife the one with the greater inheritance, despite not being firstborn. Also we see people being told to bring their disobedient sons to the city gates to be stoned. If we can learn anything from this, it's that family relationships are hard. But, do you know what is easiest to notice about these relationships...they're not deep. One man picks a wife based on looks while he's in a battle. Another says he really loves one of his wives, but still married another before or after her. God is not advocating for a man to have multiple wives in this chapter, but helping him to understand the right and wrong in the situation. And who would be willing to make the determination that their son was a lost cause and take him to be stoned? We see these dysfunctional families fueled by a lack of commitment. It's amazing how many people get married, pledging a life-long commitment, but knowing that they'll leave the marriage if someone better comes along. And how many people speak poorly of their children and their choices, but seem to take little blame for them.

Raising your child in church is no guarantee of moral behavior afterwards. Raising your child in a Christian home, teaching them about salvation in Jesus, gives you a much better chance. I'm sure our kids have heard more scripture and spiritual lessons at home than at church. Not a knock on any of our churches, but an indication of how important it is to us for our children to understand God. **Do your family relationships lack commitment? Do you fully give yourself to your husband or wife, or is it clear that you wish you could be somewhere else with someone else? If you find yourself thinking about someone who is not your spouse, repent and turn from that dangerous path. No matter what the situation was, I've found few people who are really proud of a divorce they went through. Do your kids feel a commitment from you? Do you show interest in the things they care about? Do you blame them for everything they do wrong, or do you think about how you may have contributed?**

There are families in churches today that are just as dysfunctional as the ones Israel had. It comes down to commitment: first to the Lord and then to your family.

Read Deuteronomy 22

You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. Deut 22:10 Have you ever seen things mixed together that just didn't belong? Maybe a couple that just doesn't seem to fit together well because of different personalities or a bad paint scheme in a room (pink and red are not a close match). Often times in life we try to mix and match. An electronics expert told me you should never mix old batteries with new in your remote control because it kills the new ones quicker as the old ones drain on them. A mechanic told me that you shouldn't mix different kinds of oils too often, because different breakdown levels can cause sludge in the engine. Mixing things just often isn't a good idea.

There are several verses here where God talks about mixing. He says not to mix up genders (v.5), or use different seeds in one vineyard (v.8). While God is giving them real instructions, what is He also doing? He's putting reminders in every day life about the separateness of being a child of God. We are in the world, but not of it. The example of plowing with an ox and a donkey is a great one. The ox being stronger, will pull the plow off a straight path, and the donkey will have little chance to correct it. This seems to bear close resemblance to the command not to be unequally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14). This can mean unbelievers with believers or even believers who are of different maturity levels with God. **Do you mix where none can be tolerated? Do you mix with friends and find yourself no longer following the straight paths God has for you? Do you mix yourself in romantic relationships that cause you to miss the straight paths? Are you mixing in television or music into your life and your soul that causes you to miss the straight paths God has for you? Then you need to stop mixing things that don't go together. Godliness and ungodliness cannot survive together. A choice must be made for one or the other, and the choice to mix them is a choice for ungodliness and compromise.**

Read Deuteronomy 23

You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised. Deut. 23:23 In ministry I am expected to visit the sick, elderly, infirmed and various other conditions. As a minister it never bothers me to do this, but I'm always concerned that I'm going to miss someone. If you want to see an angry Christian, ignore them for a few days while they're sick. Something I do to maintain accountability is to choose people that I haven't seen in a while and I tell them at church I'll be by that week. That way, they know I haven't forgotten them, and now there is a promise on the table. Just because we don't use the words "I promise" doesn't mean that our statements shouldn't be trusted. If you are unsure of your ability to do something, then don't give a commitment where none is asked.

Too many times We've all been disappointed by someone who made grand claims, and then failed to come through. The person's intentions weren't bad, and they genuinely planned to do what they said. But, through some mixture of forgetfulness or laziness they

didn't do what was promised. As a result, you harbor resentment towards them, and are slow to trust them in the future. **Is this how you want people to think of you? Lazy and forgetful? If you are unsure of whether you can accomplish something for someone, tell him that. Don't commit yourself to things you don't want to commit to. Don't promise to take your spouse out, if you know you can't fulfill it. Don't promise your children something if you are hesitant to really do it. Don't promise your boss something that you already know will be highly unlikely. Set your standards at a reasonable level. Let your yes be yes, and your no be no. Don't promise what you're unsure you can perform, because as a Christian it sets a bad testimony for our Lord and His people.**

Read Deuteronomy 24

You shall not pervert the justice due an alien or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge. Deut 24:17 In today's world, you have to be careful of the various scams that exist. On the Internet alone, many people have been defrauded and lost great amounts of money to online scammers. It's interesting to see people move up the "Internet" knowledge ladder. When I first started using e-mail in the 90's, everyone sent forwards, and many of them told how you could get money by forwarding them. Even today, I still occasionally get one of these e-mails from someone who hasn't been using the Internet very long. And scams that I clearly recognize (like any e-mail that comes from Nigeria), I don't even give a second glance to. However, many elderly people have become easy targets and lost money through Internet and mail scams because no one protected them.

God says that we have to be on the watch so that people are not taken advantage of. There are thousands of foreigners who live in our country and are unable to speak the language. They are treated as moronic and taken advantage of. Widows may have money, but few people to protect them. As Christians, we have a responsibility to watch out for those who have no one to protect them. We cannot stand by and watch someone be taken advantage of. God says it is our responsibility to care for widows, not just to make sure they have provision, but to also ensure that no one is defrauding them. **Do you care about the innocent? Those who have no ability to truly watch out for themselves? We'd certainly watch out for children, but there are other innocents out there who need our protection. Is there a widow that you could be checking on? Is there a foreigner you know of who could use a friend? Don't seek things from them, because then you're no better than the scammer. Do what you do out of love, and not to see what you can gain.**

Read Deuteronomy 25

You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. Deut 25:13 I noticed a disturbing trend among youth ministers in my time as a youth minister. Often times, you would see them align themselves with the "popular" kids and act differently between them and the kids who were not considered popular. It was as if these ministers were trying to gain the approval of these teens, and would even be more willing to

overlook the offenses of the popular kids, but crack down on those who were shy and easy targets. Quite honestly it looked a lot like the high school teachers who would try to associate with the popular kids, and ignore the rest outside of their classes. What is this problem really boiled down to? Simply this...do you deal with all people in a similar fashion? Do you treat people better who come to church dressed nice as opposed to those who come dressed very casually?

Do you realize that Jesus dealt with all people the same, with the same standard. He confronted sin in all people, even His friends. He often pointed out issues in the lives of His disciples, just as He did in people they ran across on a daily basis (woman at the well, rich young ruler, Pharisees). God was telling His people in their dealings with others, to have one system of measurement in trade and commerce, and treat everyone the same. **Do you treat people the same in general? Obviously you might deal with the opposite sexes in a different manner, but are you fair to everyone? Don't get caught up in cliques and groups that are not open to everyone. Jesus opened the door to all, regardless of their faults, failures or status in life. Look around your church. Are there people who are being ignored in the house of God? In your Sunday School? Near the pew you always sit in (that subject's for another day!).**

Read Deuteronomy 26

When you have finished paying all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow, that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. Deut 26:12 There are lots of questions people ask about tithing. Is the tithe a New Testament Command? Yes it is (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). How much is the tithe? Every time the word tithe is used, a tithe means "a tenth". But, one of the questions I hear asked most is, "Gross or Net?" This has become a concern to people as they see how much money they never actually touch due to taxes. It seems unfair to them to pay a tithe on money they can't immediately benefit from. It's best to ask a question in response to this question; "So you're asking if you should trust God by giving more, or not trust Him and hold back?" This response shows the problem with such a question. The problem isn't that you don't make enough to tithe, but that someone is looking to get out of something.

Personally I think a Christian should tithe from the gross, or total amount of money that one makes. Even if you have a garage sale, or get a tax refund, or sell your house, these are all fruits the Lord has provided, and I think you should tithe on it all. My wife and I have always been blessed by tithing fully to the Lord. In seminary when I was jobless, we received an investment account from my previous job. We tithed off of it, and just as the money ran out, a job came. We learned to be faithful, and God is going to repay that faithfulness in a way that is clearly His work. **Do you find yourself having a hard time letting go of what belongs to God? Few of us have trouble spending our money on the things we like. Perhaps a hobby or a collection, or even taking out the family for ice cream. While there's nothing wrong with these things, it does reveal a lot about you if you are more willing to give up your money to the world than to the church. Ask the Lord to get your heart right. Admit to the Lord your worries about giving.**

He will help you to trust Him. That's what makes the Lord so great. He helps us in our weaknesses and loves us still.

Read Deuteronomy 27

Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, "Keep all the commandments which I command you today." Deut 27:1 One of my favorite stories from basic training came from a friend in another platoon. Everyone started in a place called "Reception" where you get your shots, your clothes, and everything you need for basic training. Then they loaded each platoon into "cattle cars" which are just semi-trucks with large trailers. The trailers had no seats, just a couple windows, and you had to stand fairly close together to keep from falling down as the truck drove. Everyone is talking and carrying on, when suddenly someone notices a drill sergeant standing in the very back. He was tall and scary looking. Everyone quieted down, but the drill sergeant said "It's ok, you can talk. Just relax." So the guys went back to talking. After a few more minutes the truck hit the "tracks", a set of railroad tracks that we were told separates the base from the basic training area. After the truck hit the tracks, the Drill Sergeant said in a loud voice "Now you're mine!" A kid in the front actually started to whimper. They knew things had changed!

The actual term that Moses used when he said to keep the commandments, is to keep them in bounds. God established boundaries by His law, not as prisons but as sanctuaries. When we operate within these boundaries, we honor God and grow closer to Him. When we don't, we suffer the consequences of our own short-sighted selfishness. Israel experienced blessings as they obeyed, and curses as they ignored. **Do you take seriously the consequences of sin? Do you remember that when you accepted Jesus you stopped being an outsider, as if you were entering a new land? Everything changes once you decide to follow Jesus, because following Jesus means you move from selfishness to selflessness. You may not consider yourself selfish, but when you're not living for Jesus, you can only be living for yourself. Take seriously the commands of the Lord. Understand that God will correct His children. God loves you so much, and He desires to see you live a life that is different from the world. Are you doing everything you should to keep ungodly influences out of your life? Are you setting up boundaries for righteousness in your life that others can clearly see?**

Read Deuteronomy 28

The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. Deut 28:9 Do you know how to determine if a person belongs to God? How can you know that someone is really saved? Let me help you out by telling you, that you can't. Truly only God knows if someone has given themselves totally to Him, or if they have held back. God does give us pieces of evidence that should appear in the life of a believer: to be holy, and to keep the commandments. Many people attempt to keep the commandments, but not to be holy or obedient to God. They do it in hopes that God may show them some

favor one day when they die. That is not the approach of a person who is saved. A saved person follows the commandments of the Lord in order to be holy, set apart, making the choices that God ordains. We cannot please a holy God by ignoring the commandments he has placed before us.

Do you notice the blessings in this chapter? There are many if the people will follow after the Lord. But, if they do not, you see an exact opposite curse for every blessing. The opposite of godliness is ungodliness, in every form and circumstance. There is no middle ground, and God makes that clear to the people. **Do you seek the high ground of holiness in your life? Do you truly seek to live a life worthy of the salvation you received? A life well lived does not grant to us the right to be saved, but it should be a natural result of someone who belongs to Jesus. So who does your life belong to...Jesus or yourself? Do you realize that God will only bring one of two things to you: blessings or curses. Blessings for obedience, curses (or judgment) for disobedience. Choose obedience, no matter how difficult, and no matter what long standing struggle you have to finally deal with head on.**

Read Deuteronomy 29

I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot. Deut. 29:5 I guess I can't get the flowery memories of the Army out of my mind as I write. Near the end of basic training I had to carry two rucksacks full of equipment because my battle buddy (kind of like a swimming buddy, but with a gun) suffered an injury before a major overnight training exercise. As a result of carrying two full rucksacks for 15 miles, I had a shoulder strain, and near separation. I was sent to the military hospital on base, and I was scared. I thought "If the drill sergeants are this bad, what about the soldiers with needles?" I found the experience there to be surprisingly good. They were very focused on getting me well and making sure that I got over the injury and didn't make it worse. Even when I got back to my platoon and the drill sergeant made fun of those who were injured and on limited duty, privately he would also get on you if tried to overdo it before you recovered. It was a real weird situation, being cared for by someone that you thought hated you.

Have you ever wondered if God cared about you even in the middle of something bad? Maybe it's just a difficult situation, like the loss of a job or loved one, or perhaps you are struggling with sin and guilt. Notice that even while Israel was walking for 40 years in the wilderness as their punishment, God cared about them. He administered the punishment that put them in the desert, but at the same time made sure their provisions were fully taken care of. Can you imagine that for 40 years they wore the same clothes? Americans would probably complain that we lacked variety in our wardrobe for 40 years, and miss that God did a miraculous act. **Are you in the middle of the wilderness right now? Do you feel that God has forgotten you in the midst of a difficult stage of life? Remember, that just as God took care of His children in the desert, He takes care of us today because of our relationship with Jesus. God's promises of provision are only for His people. God has promises for the lost as well, but they're not the kind anyone is hoping for. Lost people face difficulties everyday, and I don't know how**

they do it without Jesus. So remember, Christian, that He loves you and will not forsake you and He wants to see spectacular things come out of your life for His glory.

Read Deuteronomy 30

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live Deut

30:19 I was born to an unwed teenage mother, who nearly had an abortion at the request of her family. She instead chose to live in foster care during the pregnancy to avoid that outcome, and so here I am. I was thinking the other day about how thankful I am for life. And then I began to think about Heaven, and that if I had been murdered by the abortion doctor, I would have went straight to Heaven. Would that life be better than this one? Most certainly. So why is it a big deal if a baby gets to go straight to the arms of the Father? It's a big deal because every life is precious, and we have a responsibility to protect the innocent. Should we kill handicapped infants who have been born? They'd get to go to Heaven. As God's people, we should choose life.

I openly rebuke Christians who call themselves "Prayerfully Pro-Choice." I consider them "Prayerlessly Unbiblical." As a Christian do you realize that you have chosen life? Jesus says that when we believe in Him we pass from death into life (John 5:24). Everyone is born on a collision course with Hell because we are all sinners, even from birth. But that's not God's desire for us, but His desire is for us to be saved. Our sin is what condemns us to Hell, not God. There is always something set before us. Life and death, blessings and curses. **Do you choose life everyday? Do you choose to live for the Lord every day, thinking about the blessings that He has given us through salvation, and beyond. If Jesus had only died to save us, that would be enough for us to choose obedience to Him.**

Read Deuteronomy 31

Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore." Deut 31:21 I still remember a story about a pastor in Minneapolis who began teaching that God didn't know everything, and was at times surprised by human behavior. A young couple in his church seemed like the perfect Christian couple. They were engaged and married in the church. Not long after the marriage, the man turned violent and driven by alcohol. The woman in a state of desperation talked to her pastor about it. She said she never saw any indication that her husband would be this way. The pastor told her that God hadn't known either, so she shouldn't be mad at Him. The pastor's words attempt to make God just like one of us, sometimes knowing what will happen, and sometimes not. If God doesn't know everything, it would be awfully difficult for Him to plan events in such a way as to prosper us and not to harm us (Jeremiah 29:11). Who wants to follow an ignorant God?

Here as Moses' life is coming to a close, Israel is prepared to go into the promised land. Despite everything that God has been teaching them, God tells Moses that the people WILL fall away. There will be desperate and difficult times, and God's knows their intent to do these ungodly things in the future (idol worship, intermarrying, etc). The people probably don't even know it, but God does. He has been promising restoration however, which will come through Nehemiah after Israel is defeated and later restored. Despite the sin of these people, God was still working a plan to bring salvation for the whole world through the nation of Abraham. **Do you trust God for your future? Do you believe that He has the details worked out? The Bible is clear that He does, and that we must be obedient to have all aspects of that plan happen in our lives. But, when you withhold your offerings of time, money, talents, you are showing that you do not fully trust God. If you did, you would release anything at anytime that the Lord led you to. There have been times He has led me to give to people and situations that I had no intention of supporting. But, He led me to do it out of His knowledge and will, and I have yet to suffer for doing as the Lord leads me.**

Read Deuteronomy 32

For they are a nation lacking in counsel, And there is no understanding in them.
Deut 32:28 Numerous statistics have been provided over the years regarding who teenagers turn to in times of trouble. Different research gives different answers further down, but number 1 is always friends. Usually mom's are around number 10, youth ministers 15 and dad's are close to last. What's most disturbing is that their friends are number 1. So when a teenager has a problem, instead of turning to someone with more life experience, more faith, more anything, they turn to another emotionally unstable teenager to help them work out their lives. Certainly "the blind leading the blind" would be an appropriate description. How many times have I had to unravel the "counsel" given from one teenager to another in order to help the person? Too many.

Just like teenagers, sometimes believers lack sound counsel. The Bible is clear that if you are looking for sound counsel that you should read the Word of God and talk to godly people. Not just anyone who claims to be a Christian, but that person who's life you know is different because of Jesus. That person who does the things that sometimes cause others to view them strangely, because of his commitment to Jesus. I'm tired of flipping TV channels and watching yet another psychic on tv, making murky statements and being trusted, and the Word of God that has stood the test of time is a last resort for even many believers. **Where do you get your counsel? Daily horoscope, palm readings, or some other scam. Seriously, if you do that, quit immediately. The Devil is the author of these sources, and he'll hit the nail on the head enough through generalizations to pull you in. It happens to Christians often. And it's ok to read the Bible looking for a specific answer, but if you're reading it every day with a plan (like a chapter a day for instance), you'll find yourself coming back to things you read before that apply. And find someone you trust to ask questions of. A minister or family member, or even a friend, but don't just take the first person who comes around the corner. Seeking godly counsel will direct you in God's will for you.**

Read Deuteronomy 33

Blessed are you, O Israel; Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, Who is the shield of your help And the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, And you will tread upon their high places." Deut 33:29 Being different can be such a challenge and yet is so necessary as a Christian. I don't recall really being a vocal Christian witness in high school. I made it clear what I believed, but I didn't really call others to it like I should have by sharing the gospel. I often stated what I believed the Bible said about issues. And more than once I turned down the opportunity to drink and hang out with others who were. However, I guess I still managed to live differently. Anytime our FFA chapter had an event, there would always be a prayer on the meeting, meal, or whatever we were doing. I was always asked by our advisers to do that. But, I'll never forget a BBQ we were having over the summer for officers in our chapter. It was real casual and everyone was getting ready to dig in, when our advisor asked if I would pray for the meal. He wasn't a Christian, and yet he felt compelled not only to pray, but to ask me to do it. That indicated to me that my actions were speaking more loudly than I thought, that I was seen as a person who truly believed in God.

While I believe actions are a good way to share the gospel, words are much better. God says 'Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord?' Do you realize how special the gift is that we have as believers? Do you realize that everyone needs that blessing? There is no good person who can go to church or do good things who may sneak their way in. We have to share. One of the first ways is to live a life that is different, and we must share the truth with our lips. **Do you live blessed life? Are you waiting to die in Jesus and go to Heaven, or live for Him and see others escape the eternal punishment of Hell? We are the light of the world while Jesus is gone. If we don't shine the light, it simply won't be shone. I urge you to remember that you must live differently. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you overcome sinful strongholds and allow you to live that life of blessing that leads others to the cross of Jesus Christ.**

Read Deuteronomy 34

Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face Deut 34:10 I find this to be a very comforting verse as we come to the end of this book. Moses is recognized as a special man of God, and that he was unmatched as a prophet in early Israel. But do you remember His life? He killed an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite. He argued with God when God called him to lead the people. He struck the rock for water, instead of just speaking to it, showing his growing frustration with the people. Moses made some mistakes. But, one thing you see about Moses as his life went on...despite his mistakes, he wanted to please God. He desired to serve God and see that others did as well. Maybe Israel didn't always follow perfectly, but Moses certainly did a remarkable job of leading a huge multitude to follow God through many difficult circumstances.

You may look at your life and hesitate to serve in a particular area. Maybe being a Sunday School teacher, a deacon, or even a missionary is something that God has been

speaking to you about. But, you look at yourself and see only the disappointments you have brought to the Lord. Christians seem to be quicker to list life's bogeys than the hole-in-ones we've seen in our Christian life. **You should hold on to this great statement from my first pastor (or at least the first one who preached the Bible): "You are never going to be sinless, but you should sin less." I know you've had spiritual failures, because I have too. However, if you're main goal is to honor God, those setbacks will not be permanent. Honestly confess that sin to the Lord, repent and turn from it, and then diligently guard against the sin. God isn't looking for perfect people, but for people who desire and strive to be perfect (Matthew 5:48). When you are striving for that, you are striving for Jesus.**