

Message #17

Deuteronomy 12:1-32

The average life expectancy for one living in the United States is about 78 years. There have been many articles written about the most important things that you should do with those years. Most of the article I read said basically the same things. The most important things according to them are:

- 1) Health.
- 2) Family.
- 3) Friends.
- 4) Love.
- 5) Purpose.

Now we would agree that those things are important, but we do not agree they are the most important thing. **The most important thing you can do with the time you have left in life is seek to carefully understand and obey the Word of God and worship Him.** All the other things will fall into place if we do that.

It is very clear from this book of Deuteronomy that God wants His people to be very serious about His word **as long as they live their lives on this earth. In fact, in this chapter He says I want My people knowing My exact words and don't add or subtract one word.** That is clearly the point of this chapter:

IF GOD'S PEOPLE WANT GOD'S BLESSINGS, THEY MUST PRECISELY OBEY GOD'S WORD WHEN IT COMES TO WORSHIP AND LIFE AND NOT ADD OR SUBTRACT WHETHER IT IS NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE AS LONG AS THEY LIVE ON THIS EARTH.

Verse 1 challenges God's people to carefully obey God's instructions "as long as you live on the earth." If you will do that, God promises He will bless you.

Before we begin our journey through this, let's remember what Moses has driven home in the previous eleven chapters. Carefully guard, protect, know and apply the Word of God which is written. So as we embark on situations in life, this is our responsibility. Whether we like what the word says or whether we completely grasp and understand everything about what the word says, our responsibility is to obey it, if we want God's blessings. That is what Moses has driven home in the previous chapters.

So here we go. When it comes to life and worship, it must be on God's terms and not our terms. Moses starts this off by giving eleven simple instructions. They are not hard to understand, they are as plain as day.

INSTRUCTION #1 – Completely destroy false religion and do not ever behave like them.

12:2-4

God does not want His people tolerant of any false religion. Now in this dispensation, we cannot go around tearing down and smashing to bits places that promote false religion, but we certainly can point them out and we certainly can get rid of anything religious that is not true and sound from our own lives and we should certainly do it here in this church.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe hit the nail on the head about Canaanite religions when he said they were “false and filthy” (*Be Equipped*, p. 96). The Canaanites usually picked places on high mountains and hills and they built their places of worship. They built altars and carved out their deities and God says when you get into that Promised Land, you wipe them all out. Tear them all down and destroy them. Bash them and burn them. Don’t even mention their names. It does not matter how beautiful or aesthetic they are, you get rid of them.

According to **verse 4**, God says you don’t worship Me their way, ever. Don’t let their worship infiltrate anything connected to Me. You do not go to their idolatrous place of worship and you do not copy their way of worship. In fact, it was their evil worship that caused Me to destroy them.

There is a very important point to glean from this. God’s people must carefully analyze anything that we classify as worship to make sure it squares with God’s word and is acceptable to Him. There are things that could be in worship services that are unacceptable to God because they are not true to His word. Those things need to be eliminated. There are religious leaders who will tell you that it is not politically correct to pray in Jesus’ name. It is not nice to say that Jesus is the only way to God. All religions have their good points. They are false and need to be condemned.

This will sound like a broken record. Back in the 70’s I lived in the world of rock and roll radio. I stood on the stage with some of the biggest entertainers in the world. Many of them were on my radio show. People like the Doobie Brothers, Alice Cooper, Gary Wright, Bobby Vinton, Mac Davis, just to name a few. These bands would get to the stadium and set up their drums and tune up their electric guitars. The exact same thing now is in churches and I am convinced it is evil and it is not worship. Don’t ever let anyone tell you it is worship. It is despicable and it is not acceptable to God and people who are allowing this to go on in their churches are not doing what Moses says right here.

INSTRUCTION #2 – Go to the sacred place of worship and give offerings and fellowship and rejoice and praise God for His blessings. **12:5-7**

At this point in time, Israel had been worshipping God at a tent/tabernacle. It was movable. God would direct His people to the place He wanted it to be and it was there where the people were to come to worship God. God says this is the place where I put My name. **God determines the way to worship Him and God determines the place to worship Him.**

Now this place would be a place inside the Promised Land. God would choose it and when He did the people needed to respect it and they needed to worship Him there and worship His way. This would be the place where the people would bring their sacrificial offerings and this was the place where those offerings were acceptable.

At no point could one say well I'll just give some of my offering to God at His place of worship and the rest I'll give to other things and call it my offering. You could do that, but it would not be pleasing or acceptable or obedient to God.

In **verse 6** there is a subdivision list of the kind of offerings people would bring:

- 1) They would bring burnt offerings. First offering completely burned as sweet savor to God.
- 2) They would bring sacrifices - Voluntary (burnt, grain, peace); Mandatory (sin, trespass).
Not completely burned.
- 3) They would bring tithes - 10% offerings on a variety of things - grain, seed, fruit, money (Lev. 27:30).
- 4) They would bring contributions - various monetary contributions given to the ministers.
- 5) They would bring votive offerings - voluntary offerings not demanded by God, which someone vowed or promised.
- 6) They would bring free will offerings - offerings voluntarily given by free choice.
- 7) They would bring first fruit offerings - give God His offering first.

Some of the offerings were for forgiveness and some were expressions of thankfulness for God's blessings. **But a key part of worship was obviously people bringing their offerings to the Lord.**

As Doug MacIntosh said, in his commentary, "God ought to be given the choice portion of our wealth and not its dregs" (*Deuteronomy*, p. 164).

According to **verse 7**, the entire family was to go to this place and worship and there they would present their offerings and eat and fellowship and praise God for all He had given them.

People who see church as a take it or leave it afterthought are making a fatal and eternal mistake.

INSTRUCTION #3 – Do not ever fall into the trap of doing what is right in your own eyes.
12:8-9

God does not ever sanction "improvised worship." When God directs a people to a place, He expects them to worship Him in the manner He prescribes. Worship is to be conducted at God's designated place of worship. You do not want to wing it on your own when it comes to worship because God takes that very seriously.

Verse 9 says one reason why you want to obey God and not do what is right in your own eyes is that you have not arrived yet to your ultimate destination and inheritance.

When God directed His people to a place to live, He expected them to worship Him at His prescribed place of worship. When things are going good, you do not want to get sloppy about worship.

This is the Church Age and God expects His people to gather together and worship at Church. In fact, in Revelation, Jesus Christ, Himself, shows the importance of the local church by addressing seven of them. The most important thing that we should do at church is worship. This is the most important activity of the church.

INSTRUCTION #4 – When God brings you to the place of blessing, continue to give to Him and rejoice over what God has done for you. **12:10-12**

God is sovereign over where His people live. When God grants His people a secure life in a specific location, it is a true blessing of God.

Once they were there God would choose a place for His worship. According to **verse 11**, this was to be a place where God's people were to bring their offerings:

- 1) Burnt offerings - first offering completely burned opening up access to God.
- 2) Sacrifices - this covers anything someone would sacrificially give to the Lord.
- 3) Tithes - 10% offering of everything - grain, seed, fruit (Lev. 27:30).
- 4) Contributions - this certainly would have to do with monetary contributions.
- 5) Votive offerings - offerings given voluntarily which are vowed, not demanded by the law.

Notice the emphasis in **verse 12** on rejoicing before the Lord (**v. 7, 12, 18**). The family goes to worship and rejoices over all God has given and all God has done.

INSTRUCTION #5 – Do not invent your own place of worship. **12:13-14**

When it comes to offering worship, you don't want to wing it or whim it. God is very clear on this point; you do not give your offerings any place. You are to give your offerings at places God designates. One thing is very clear and that is the place where you are giving your offerings had better be a place that is very serious about the word of God.

There are religious places that should not get one dime of our money. These places are not acceptable to God and giving money to these places is not pleasing to God.

INSTRUCTION #6 – Whatever God gives you, you may eat but not the blood. **12:15-16**

Moses said you do not have to give God a percentage of all animals. If God blesses you, you certainly have a right to enjoy all of the blessings He gives to you. You have freedom of choice as to what you could enjoy.

All could share in the blessings, those ceremonially clean and those who were unclean. But the one prohibition is do not drink the blood. That is what cults do. That is a practice of false religion.

INSTRUCTION #7 – Do not use what belongs to the Lord for yourself but always take what belongs to the Lord to His place of worship. **12:17-18**

The ten percent tithe of the grain and new wine and oil and the firstborn of a herd of flock was to be offered to the Lord. God's people were to be thankful and happy with all God gave them. God's people were to take God His share and give it to Him. They were not to use God's portion for themselves.

INSTRUCTION #8 – Do not forsake the minister and his needs. **12:19**

God's ministers are to be supported by God's people. They had no farm of their own to earn support, so God's people were to take care of them. Jesus taught that a minister was "worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7). Paul said, "so also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14). Paul qualifies who is to be financially supported, "those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (I Tim. 5:17).

If a minister works hard at preaching and teaching God's word, he is to be supported and if God's people do that, God will bless them.

INSTRUCTION #9 – As God increases and expands your boundaries you may make some food adjustments but do not eat blood. **12:20-25**

God did not ever restrict His people to being vegetarians. His people have a right to eat meat. They could eat it from their own herds or flocks and they could hunt for deer or gazelle. The only stipulation was they were not to eat the blood.

If Israel obeyed God in these things, God would bless them. What this shows us about the law is that it is not some rigid list of dos and don'ts. Obeying God's word leads God's people into a full enjoyment of life. God's leading is a flexible and developmental leading.

INSTRUCTION #10 – God's offerings are to be brought to God's appointed place of worship. **12:26-27**

There are consecrated things to God that must be taken to the place of worship and given to God. N.T. believers are not under O.T. tithing laws. But we are to give generously and systematically as God has prospered us.

INSTRUCTIONS #11 – Carefully listen to all of God's word and obey it and do not add or take away from it when God is blessing you. **12:28-32**

Verse 20 begins with a key Hebrew word "Be careful" (shamar). Carefully guard, observe, protect, honor God's word. If God's people will listen to God's word and obey it, "it may be well with you."

As God's continues to bless His people, they come in contact with more and more people. God wants to emphasize that they need to stay focused on obeying God's word and not following the false religious lures of the rest of the world.

In **verse 30** there is a very important principle to see. There are some things that are very dangerous to learn. There are some forms of knowledge that we do not want to pursue. Do not inquire or research things that are postulated by godless people because those kinds of things can destroy you.

God wants us to use our minds to learn things. But He does not want us to learn godless, immoral, false religious things. I have never believed it was right to study the beliefs of false religions that God detests. The reason is because the potential exists for God's own people to do detestable things.

Some of the evil knowledge of these people caused them to burn their own sons and daughters as a sacrifice (**v. 31**). Why would you want to study a religion that led to that?

When we were in Turkey, the Turkish government wanted all our groups to go through a Muslim Temple. We shocked everyone when we said we aren't doing it. We are here to see Biblical places; we are not here to visit the place of false religion.

God says you worship Me. You follow My word. You stay clear of false religion. You take My word seriously - don't add or subtract and all will be well with you.