

TODAY IN THE WORD

MARCH 2004

All these blessings
will come upon you
and accompany you if
you obey the
Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 28:2

ABOVE THE LAW

If you are like most people surveyed by Allstate Insurance, you may feel that obeying the speed limit is optional.

In a recent survey, 71 percent of drivers said they have driven faster than the posted speed limit within the past six months. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that

drivers say their speed on local expressways can be as high as 70 mph, even up to 93 mph. In fact, the article says “those who obey the law stand out as roadblocks.”

The law, it seems, is optional.

Our study this month in *Today in the Word* focuses on the book of Deuteronomy. In Greek, the word

Deuteronomy means the “second law.” This was the second telling of the Law to the generation of Israelites who had come out of the wilderness.

Certainly, to some of those young people, the Law given by Moses seemed archaic, out-of-date, meant for another time and place. However, the emphasis wasn’t merely to reinterpret the Law, but to remind the Israelites of the importance of obedience.

The Israelites were called to a new covenant of obedience. They were to obey with their hearts, and not just go through the motions.

For many of us, the law is something we merely acknowledge. Like the speed limit, we put our foot on the brakes when we suspect we might get caught. Sometimes

we slow down if we sense danger. But an adherence to the law requires more than a mere acknowledgement of its existence. God’s Law demands our heartfelt obedience because we know the Author. In Deuteronomy 6:5–6 the Israelites are given just that reason: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.”

The Law is not something we should merely adhere to; it is to be pressed upon our heart, passed on to our children, reflected in our lives. In the New Testament, we learn that we are not justified by keeping the Law, yet the Law provides a roadway to righteous living. “Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and revering him” (Deut. 8:6).

When my children were little, I can remember many times when they asked why they had to obey. More often than I cared to admit, I would sternly say, “Because I told you so.”

Of course I was not just on a parental power trip. I had their best interests at heart. My rules and my decisions were a result of my love for them. I desired their obedience out of their love for me.

As we speed through our daily lives, let us not merely tap our foot on the brakes in adherence to God’s Law. Instead, let us seek Him in the pages of Scripture, to know and love and honor the Author of the Law, to show Him the obedience of a humble heart.



Stephen Stowell

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Immutability

The words to the beloved hymn “Abide With Me” were written by Howard F. Lyte as he was dying of tuberculosis. In this song he declares:

*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.*

The dying hymn writer found comfort in the fact that God does not change. The theologians refer to this as the attribute of immutability. James speaks of it when he characterizes God as “the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

Unlike the world around us, which is marked by decay and “shifting shadows,” God’s character and faithfulness are constant. As the Giver of every good and perfect gift, He can always be trusted. The gods of pagan mythology were capricious and given to selfish whims. They might be appeased by sacrifice but could not be trusted. Those who worshiped such gods believed they might receive good things from their hands one day and evil things the next. The God of the Bible, on the other hand, is incapable of doing evil. He cannot sin and does not entice others to sin (James 1:13–15).

By describing God as the Father of heavenly lights, James links the attribute of immutability with divine power. The God we worship and serve created the universe and controls it. Every changing circumstance we face must first pass through the gate of His good purpose for our lives.

Why Theology Matters

Theologian Herman Bavinck has observed, “If God were not immutable, He would not be God.” His essence, attributes, and understanding do not change. He is never in a quandary, never in doubt about what the future holds, and never uncertain of what He will do about it. He will never be less than He is and does not need to be more. He will always be worthy of our worship.

For Further Reading
Read more about the immutability of God in *The Doctrine of God*
by Herman Bavinck (Baker).



MBI Today

NEWS OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS AT MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE
MARCH 2004

SHARE 04



Sharing God's Blessings with Moody Radio and Angola

by *Lisa Ann Cockrel*

SHARE 2004 is just around the corner! As usual, this annual fundraising drive for Moody Broadcasting Network (MBN) will give listeners across the country an opportunity to support their favorite Christian programming and the ministry of their local MBN station. But this year SHARE will also provide an exciting new opportunity for MBN listeners to support a vital ministry in Angola, Africa.

The organization RISE International has a campaign to build desperately needed schools in the central highlands region of Angola. The Christians among the Ovimbundu people in this area are determined to educate their children. They know that unless their children learn to read well, the churches are doomed to extinction. To assist with this crucial work, MBN will be giving a portion of all SHARE donations to RISE International in appreciation of Pastor Donald Cole, who served as Moody's radio pastor after he and his wife Naomi spent 18 years as missionaries in the war-ravaged country of Angola.

Known for his wisdom and insight when answering questions about the Bible on the national call-in program "Open Line," Cole has also dedicated his life to ministry in Angola. He and Naomi have returned on various missions projects, and

his son Andrew is now president of RISE International.

"It takes slightly over \$6,000 to build one school. This cost includes the building materials and construction as well as student supplies and teaching materials," explained Pam McCain, SHARE operations coordinator. "If we reach our SHARE 2004 national goal of \$8,529,000, donors will contribute enough funds to reach our goal to build and equip 40 schools in Angola."

MBN is grateful for the support of its listeners and is excited that SHARE 2004 will cover about half of the costs of the coming year of broadcasting and also fund schools in Angola. A contribution toward the rebuilding of primary schools is a vote for the survival of healthy churches in central Angola. More importantly, it's a vote for the proclamation of the gospel.

*For more information about RISE International visit www.riseinternational.org.
For more information about SHARE 2004, visit www.mbn.org or call 1-800-DL-MOODY.*



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Deuteronomy: Wisdom of Obedience

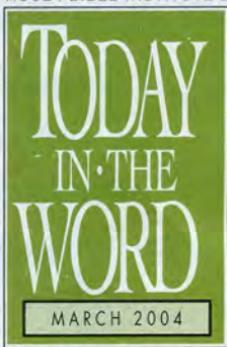
In this age of grace, we don't regularly see swift, immediate judgments cast down on all who disobey God—how often are we thankful for that! If we focus only on this present world, it can be easy to lose sight of the importance of obedience.

But Old Testament Israel is a clinical case study in the lessons of obedience. In Deuteronomy, Moses speaks to a nation on the brink of the Promised Land, a pivotal point in their history. After completing a forty-year sentence for rebelling against God, they are preparing to witness God's judgment against the wicked nations inhabiting Canaan. The events that unfold in the years that follow hinge directly on Israel's obedience to God's instructions.

And in this national address, God reveals a very personal message about the need for an intimate relationship with Him. Join us this month in *Today in the Word* as we reinforce the message of personal obedience, which takes on even greater importance in the spiritual warfare we experience today.

**Thank you for your prayers
and support in 2003!**

MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE'S



VOLUME 17 ISSUE 3

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Bruce W. Anderson

MANAGING EDITOR

Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Adam Kellogg

Elena Maffei

WRITER

John Koessler

DESIGN

Nancy Rudd

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Paul Currie

PERMISSIONS

Joan Murphy

1-800-DL MOODY

(356-6639)

www.moody.edu

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*Do not be
stiff-necked,
as your
fathers were;
submit to
the Lord.*

2 CHRONICLES 30:8



TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Larry Mercer, Senior Vice President of Media, welcomes your prayers this month as many Moody Radio stations start their Share 2004 events. Pray for the success of this annual fund raiser and for God's blessing on Moody's media ministry.

Read: Deuteronomy 1:1–3:29

TODAY IN THE WORD



One day a woman brought her son to the Greek philosopher Diogenes. “He is rude and behaves badly,” she complained. “What can I do to improve his conduct?” With characteristic bluntness, the philosopher replied: “Strike his mother in the face.”

Parental example often shapes the conduct of a child. If the example is a good one, this can be a blessing. But what if the example is bad? Are children doomed to follow in their parents' footsteps, making the same foolish choices and suffering the same consequences?

This question must have plagued the people of Israel as they prepared to enter the land of promise. Their parents had wandered in the wilderness for forty years and eventually perished there because they failed to trust God when He ordered them to enter the first time. The children had survived, but by this time the great acts of God that had purchased their deliverance from slavery in Egypt were only a distant memory. If the parents had failed so miserably when these events were still fresh, what possible hope could there be for the children?

God Himself provided the solution by calling the nation of Israel to renew its covenant with Him. To prepare them for the task of taking their promised inheritance, Israel's God outlined the laws that would guide their lives in the Promised Land, beginning with a review of the

nation's history. Without mincing words, Moses recounted both God's provision and Israel's unfaithfulness. His purpose was not to rub Israel's nose in past failure but to help them to see their current circumstances through the eyes of faith. It was true that their record was one of repeated failure. God's, however, was one of unflinching love, fatherly discipline, and abiding faithfulness. By trusting in the one who redeemed them from bondage, this generation could learn from the mistakes of their parents.

These two themes, our need and God's provision, run through the entire book of Deuteronomy. It reveals God's standard, shows us where we have fallen short, and ultimately holds out the hope by painting a vivid picture of the One who is our Redeemer.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Do you see your family background as a help or a hindrance to your spiritual life? In some ways, it is both. We may have scars that are the result of our parents' bad choices or have learned patterns of behavior that Christ wants us to “unlearn.”

Read Psalm 139 and think about what its message implies about the part God played in determining your family background. Thank Him that His steady hand continues to guide your life.

Read: Deuteronomy 4:1-43

TODAY IN THE WORD



A new believer went to bed one evening thinking about angels. “God,” he prayed, “So far I have only read about angels. Now I want to see one. Please let me see an angel with my own eyes.” He squeezed his eyes tightly shut and lay as still as he could, hardly breathing in his anticipation that God would answer his prayer. At last he gathered up the courage to open his eyes, but only a little. A thrill of fear shot through him as he saw the shapeless form next to his bed.

Instead of being happy at the prospect of having his request granted, he covered his eyes with his hands and began to plead with God again. “I’ve changed my mind, God,” he begged. “Please, take it away. I don’t want to see an angel after all.” When he finally found the courage to look again, he realized that instead of disappearing, the form was now even more distinct than before. Indeed, with eyes wide open and heart pounding, he now saw the form for what it truly was—the mound of clothing that he had piled on the chair next to his bed before lying down to sleep.

Instead of being imaginary, Israel’s encounter with God during the Exodus was very real and far more terrifying. The generation that Moses led out of Egypt saw God’s deliverance with their own eyes and heard His words with their own ears. According to the author of the book of Hebrews, “The sight

was so terrifying that Moses said, ‘I am trembling with fear’” (Heb. 12:21). This experience was intended to make a lasting impression on God’s people, but they quickly forgot all they had seen and heard. It didn’t take long before they had violated nearly every command they had heard God’s voice declare.

Amazingly, God did not abandon His people or revoke His covenant with them. But neither did He lower His standard. Instead, He provided a leader to intercede on their behalf and offered them an opportunity to renew their commitment to Him. He urged them to teach their children the truths that they had heard declared. In this way, He showed that His ultimate goal was not to terrify His people, but to teach them the fear of the Lord.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Our God is a God of grace and expectation. Can you think of a time when you experienced a remarkable deliverance or were made aware of some new truth from your study of God’s Word? How did you respond? In Deuteronomy 4:32-39 Moses describes several of Israel’s experiences and calls God’s people to respond in faith and obedience. Write a similar account of your own experiences and conclude with a challenge to yourself to “hold fast” to the Lord and renew your commitment to obeying Christ.

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance?

MICAH 7:18



TODAY AT MOODY

Several Moody Radio stations start their Share 2004 today—WMBW in Chattanooga, Tennessee, is among them. Please remember in prayer its staff—Leighton LeBoeuf, Paul Martin, Andrew Napier, and Mary Parris—as they reach out to their listeners.

*As I judged
your fathers
in the desert
of the land of
Egypt, so I
will judge
you, declares
the Sovereign
Lord.*

EZEKIEL 20:36



TODAY AT MOODY

The first Wednesday in March traditionally marks MBI Day of Prayer—a day for the students to take time off classes and for the whole Institute to come together before God as a praying community. We invite you, a valued member of this community, to join us today.

Read: Deuteronomy 4:44–5:5

TODAY IN THE WORD



Israel received the Law of God while they camped in the valley of Beth Peor in the land of the Amorites. They defeated Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites. They had been summoned by God to Mount Sinai, referred to here as Horeb, a term that comes from a Hebrew word meaning “desolate region” and sometimes used to speak both of the area in which Sinai is located and of the mountain itself (cf. Ex. 3:1; 33:6). It was here that Israel personally encountered the Living God and entered into a covenant with Him.

In view of this, it is surprising to read Moses’ statement in today’s passage claiming, “It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today” (Deut. 5:3). The parents of those who heard these words were present when the Law was given on Sinai. When they heard the commandments they replied, “Everything the Lord has said we will do” (Ex. 24:3). What, then, did Moses mean?

Moses could not have meant that God had never entered into a covenant with Israel’s ancestors. Nor could he have meant that the Law somehow did not apply to the parents of those who were being addressing at that moment. In effect, his message was simply this: “God isn’t dealing with them now, He is dealing with you. It is time for you to commit

yourself to obedience.”

The previous generation heard God’s Word and promised to obey it, but they failed to follow through on their commitment. Even if they had obeyed, it still would have been necessary for the generation that followed them to make a personal commitment of their own.

Our obedience should not be a merely perfunctory allegiance to the religious principles that have been handed down to us by earlier generations. God invites each person to enter into a personal relationship with Him by placing faith in His Son Jesus Christ. My parents’ lack of faith does not necessarily have to be a detriment in developing my personal relationship with God, and their possession of genuine faith will not be an asset unless I possess faith myself.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



A religious heritage from one’s parents is a great benefit, but it is no substitute for personal faith.

Have you personally made a commitment of faith to Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? If not, do so today. Recognize that because of your sin, you cannot come to God on your own. But by trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus to pay for your sins, you can have this relationship with God (Rom. 3:23, 5:8, 6:23, 8:38). If you need to talk to someone about this decision, call a pastor or Christian friend today.

Read: Deuteronomy 5:6–21

TODAY IN THE WORD



A family was studying a devotional about giving the Ten Commandments.

The father asked, “How many commandments did God give to Moses?” Without skipping a beat, their five-year-old son replied, “Too many!”

On the surface it may seem to us as if that five-year-old was correct. Especially when we note that Moses began his exposition of God’s “commandments, decrees and laws” with a review of the Ten Commandments. Many people today feel that ten rules from God are challenging enough. Just imagine what it must have been like for the people of Israel when they heard all the stipulations laid down in the rest of the Mosaic Law.

Some responded by attempting to sift through all of God’s decrees to identify those that were most important. Matthew’s Gospel tells how one expert in the Mosaic Law came to Jesus and asked Him which was the greatest commandment of all. Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:37–39). A quick survey of Moses’ summary of the foundational commands of the Law confirms Jesus’ statement. All its commands and all the commands

that follow in the book of Deuteronomy are coordinated by these two great poles: our obligation to God and our obligation to others.

Although today those who know Christ are not bound under the Mosaic Law, neither are they free from God’s law. They are under the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21). With the possible exception of the Sabbath command, all Ten Commandments are reiterated in some form in the New Testament. However, these commands should not be viewed as a ladder. We can’t climb into God’s presence by obeying them. The standard they set is certainly high enough. It is our own strength that falls short. Instead, the Commandments serve as both a window and a mirror. They provide us with a view of God’s righteousness and reflect back our own sinfulness.



TODAY ALONG

Do either of these statements describe you? “I don’t think God expects anyone

to take the Ten Commandments seriously,” or “I think you can get to heaven by obeying the Ten Commandments.” These are misunderstandings of God’s Law. Scripture also teaches that “no one is justified before God by the law” (Gal. 3:11). It’s clear from both the Old and the New Testaments that these commandments do provide a moral foundation for behavior. To help hide this Word in your heart, write out and memorize the Ten Commandments.

The commandments . . . are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

ROMANS 13:9



TODAY AT MOODY

Would you pray for Dr. Thomas Shaw, Vice President of Student Services? Our prayer is that the staff under his leadership would provide the best possible service to our students and alumni and will always be there for them.

*For there is
one God and
one mediator
between God
and men,
the man
Christ Jesus.*

1 TIMOTHY 2:5



TODAY AT MOODY

Today our Admissions department hosts a Day One event on campus—a time for our prospective students to visit the campus for a whole day of various activities. Let's use this time to pray for the present and future students of the Institute.

Read: Deuteronomy 5:22–33

TODAY IN THE WORD



This coming Sunday you may lift your hands in worship and sing, “Our God is an awesome God,” and then a few hours later use the same term to describe the meal you just ate or the detailing on your neighbor’s car. Although the language of awe is commonplace among us, we rarely actually experience it.

Israel, on the other hand, learned from firsthand experience that the God they worshiped was awesome. After they heard the words of the Law proclaimed by God’s own voice, they were filled with joy and terror. They rejoiced to discover that “a man can live even if God speaks with him” (Deut. 5:24). However, they did not feel that such a relationship could be sustained without help. They begged Moses to act as their mediator—pleading with him to be God’s spokesman and their representative.

This illustrates one of the primary themes of the Old Testament law: the truth that we need someone to bridge the gap between man and God that has been created by our sin.

While the church has always recognized this problem, it has not always sought an adequate solution. Like Israel, some have looked to other believers to function as mediators. The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ has fulfilled what Israel asked of Moses. Others

may be appointed as priests, but only Christ can function as a true priest. He alone knows what it’s like to be God and man. His death on the cross is the only payment God will accept for sin. Because He rose from the dead and lives forever, He is the only one who is “able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:25).

Our God is indeed awesome, but we should not be terrified of Him if we are trusting in Christ. All who are in Christ enjoy the privilege of direct access through the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18). We don’t need to depend upon anyone else to bring us to God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Have you been looking to someone or something other than Jesus Christ to serve as your “bridge” into God’s presence? Perhaps you have been relying on the clergy or rites of the church to make you right with God. Others in the church can instruct us and pray for us. They can be a source of great encouragement and can be used to help us grow spiritually. The ordinances of the church are a helpful reminder of what Jesus did. But only Christ can bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).

Read: Deuteronomy 6:1–25

TODAY IN THE WORD



Although Jill believes in having family devotions, they never seem to

turn out the way she thinks they should. She easily identifies with the mother whose daughter once asked, “Mommy, when are we going to get together and have family commotions?”

“Family commotions”

seem to be a good description of what happens when Jill suggests that it’s time for her family to study the Bible. “Can’t we do it later?” someone will ask. “I’m watching television” another will complain. All too often the children seem bored, the dog barks, or the phone rings.

Spending time together in God’s Word is a challenge for most families today. How good to learn, then, that God’s plan doesn’t limit the family’s spiritual life to a single method. Instead, it prescribes a holistic approach to training children in spiritual matters. God does indeed command Christian parents to pass on the truths of the faith to their children, but the strategy He prescribes is a flexible one. Parents are called to explain spiritual truths to their children in the context of ordinary life. Instead of demanding that family devotions be observed at a specific time, this subject is to be the focus of family discussion throughout the day. Biblical principles should be so naturally woven into the fabric of our daily lives that it seems as if they were written on the doorframes of our houses

and inscribed on our gates (Deut. 6:9).

Today’s passage also suggests that parents should expect their children to ask questions about the significance of the faith traditions that God’s people observe (Deut. 6:20). This is a valuable reminder that when our children question our beliefs and practices, they aren’t necessarily showing disrespect.

Robert Coles, a noted observer of the spiritual habits of children, has said, “I have listened to children of eight or nine or ten getting to the heart of the Bible. I have found in elementary schools a good deal of spiritual curiosity that does not reflect mere indoctrination.” Often their questions reflect a deeper quest for meaning, and we should be ready for these teachable moments.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



When was the last time you discussed God’s Word together as a family?

If you have a plan for family devotions, try not to limit your spiritual conversations to just these formal occasions. If your approach to your family’s spiritual life is more informal, be careful not to let the subject of God’s truth become pushed aside by the rush of the day.

God doesn’t limit His interest in us only to those times when we are praying or worshipping. We shouldn’t compartmentalize our family’s spiritual life. Any time of day or night is the right time to talk about God!

Command and teach these things.

1 TIMOTHY 4:11



TODAY AT MOODY

Today our campus welcomes the participants of the MBI Men’s Conference. We invite you to pray for those who worked behind the scenes on every detail—our Conference Ministries staff: Rebecca Anderson, Richard Pierce, and Stacey Pittman.

Question Answer

Q *Is baptism really necessary? If so, why and how?*

A Of course it is necessary. Jesus instructed the apostles to baptize those who believed the gospel (Matt. 28:19–20). That instruction (i.e. command) has never been rescinded.

The apostles obeyed the command; they baptized their converts. See Acts 2:40–41; 10:47–48; 16:33; 19:1–5. From the time of the apostles until the present, virtually every denomination of Christians has practiced the rite of baptism.

How should it be done? The baptism of the Ethiopian (Acts 8:36–39) implies immersion. They “went down into the water” and “came up out of the water.” The method is determined by its meaning. Romans 6:1–4 seems to refer to baptism as a dramatization of our spiritual union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. If this is indeed its meaning (as I believe it to be) immersion is the proper method. Immersion alone can portray death, burial, and rising again.

In fairness, I must admit that many Bible students disagree. They do not question our union with Christ as set forth in Romans 6;

they just move it back a step to the coming of the Holy Spirit who makes the union a spiritual reality. Consequently, they sprinkle new believers. Sprinkling illustrates the meaning of baptism as they see it.

Q *What, in your opinion, is the correct baptism formula? Should the pastor say, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost?” or is it all right to cut it short—to baptize just in the name of Jesus, as happens in our church?*

A There is no specific formula. Jesus commanded the apostles to baptize believers “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” but that was not a formula (Matt. 28:19–20). Luke reports that converts were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, or in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:5). The use of Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus, as is common in Acts, is a figure of speech called synecdoche. The whole is indicated by reference to a part. We speak of “the breaking of bread” for the Lord’s Supper, but our use of the expression does not exclude the cup. A young person

who complains that he doesn't have wheels means that he doesn't have a car. The part stands for the whole.

There is only one name, and whether we baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, or simply in the name of Jesus or Jesus Christ, we are using the name that belongs to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Q *Recently, our daughter—who is a Christian—forsook us and joined a cult. She is a different person—unreasonable and unloving, though she says her new friends are more loving than any Christians she knows. Is she lost? Will God answer our prayers for her recovery?*

A I take your word for it that your daughter is a sincere Christian. For that reason, I can assure you that she will be saved. Eventually, depending on how long you live, you will see your prayers answered. In 2 Timothy 2:18 Paul talks passionately about men like today's cultists: "they destroy the faith of some." However, Paul goes on to

make two reassuring statements: "The Lord knows those who are His" (v. 19), and [some, responding to the help of sensible believers] "may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil" (v. 26). Your prayer should be that your daughter meets sensible believers who will help her come to her senses.

Q *Is it correct to recite the Creed every day?*

A How could it be incorrect? Assuming that you refer to the Apostles' Creed, it is a personal affirmation of faith that takes less than a minute to say. Though frequently recited in churches by congregations, the Creed begins with the first person singular pronoun: "I believe . . ." Not everybody in church can recite the Creed truthfully.

Its recitation is incorrect only when done by unbelievers, or by believers who think that saying the Creed improves their souls or is a neat substitute for the Scriptures. For the rest, it is instructive, a concise reminder of the great doctrines we hold to be true.

Not everybody

in church can

recite the Creed

truthfully.

*Therefore
come out
from them
and be
separate,
says the Lord.*

2 CORINTHIANS 6:17



TODAY AT MOODY

Please pray today for the employees in our Operations Division headed by Senior Vice President Timothy Ostrander. Their dedicated, day-to-day service provides support for all MBI's ministries across the country and around the world.

Read: Deuteronomy 7:1–26

TODAY IN THE WORD



In our culture today, some aspects of this passage may be disturbing. The command to totally destroy all those living in the land of Canaan makes sense only when the authority of the God who gave it is kept in view. He is the God who “made every nation of men” and the one who “determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26).

As Creator of the world, Israel’s God also had authority over all nations, even over those who did not acknowledge Him as God. As the only one who possesses the power to give life, He also has the authority to take it (Neh. 9:6; cf. Job 1:21).

In order to understand this difficult command, we should keep in mind that God promised to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham (Gen. 15:7). When Israel moved into Canaan, they weren’t stealing the land but claiming what was rightfully theirs.

God’s purpose for Israel was to function as a “light to the nations” (Isa. 51:4). God’s people were never meant to be isolated, but they were intended to be a nation apart. This could not happen if they adopted the values and practices of their neighbors. The danger of corruption was so great that drastic measures had to be taken. Intermarriage with those who didn’t worship their God would only erode Israel’s faith and

eventually lead to assimilation by the surrounding nations.

Finally, this command must be understood in the context of Canaanite sin and idolatry. God had patiently waited for four generations until the sin of the inhabitants of Canaan had reached its full measure before issuing this command (Gen. 15:16). By carrying it out, God’s people were acting as instruments of divine justice. The fate of the nations that were destroyed provided a solemn warning to Israel of the dangers of idolatry and of the need to keep themselves holy. Israel had been chosen out of love, but it was a love that called for uncompromising devotion to God’s will and His ways in return.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Which would others say is most true of you? Are you an influencer? Or are you more influenced by others around you? Most of us are both—our attitudes and actions are affected by those around us, and we in turn help to shape the behavior of others.

We need to be careful about both dimensions. Make a list of the three most influential people in your life today. Are they helping you to move toward God or away from Him? Now write the names of three people who are being touched by your life. What kind of an influence have you had on them?

Read: Deuteronomy 8:1–20

TODAY IN THE WORD



Multi-millionaire J. Paul Getty was once asked to write a short article

explaining the secret of his financial success. He agreed and promptly sent the publisher a sheet of paper with a single sentence written on it. It read: "Some people find oil. Others don't." Was he simply lucky? Your answer will depend upon the role you see that God plays in success.

What many might characterize as "luck," the Bible labels as grace. One definition of grace is "unmerited favor." When God grants me a blessing that I don't deserve, He shows me grace. This was certainly true of Israel. They had not earned the right to dwell in the land of Canaan. It was God's gift to them. This great blessing brought with it a corresponding risk. It was possible, even likely, that once they had settled in the land, God's people would come to believe that they had done something to deserve all they had received. They would forget God's mighty acts of deliverance and their own disobedience. Instead of crediting Him with their success, they would attribute it to their own power and strength.

The familiar saying warns that those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. Israel was in danger of suffering an even worse fate. For them, to forget their history was equivalent to forgetting God. They were warned that such spiritual amnesia would eventually lead

to their expulsion from the land of promise. Israel's experience in the wilderness had shown that the God of blessing was also a God of discipline. He loved them too much to let them forget all He had done, and He was willing to take drastic measures to "jog" His people's spiritual memory.

Difficult circumstances are not an indication that God has turned His back on the believer. During the wilderness experience God had used hardship to humble His people and to reveal what was in their hearts. In the same way, God has promised to discipline us for our good (Heb. 12:6, 10). He often uses difficult circumstances to get our attention—to remind us of our dependency on Him and to reveal what is in our hearts.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Memory is one of the secrets of maintaining an attitude of gratitude for all that God has done. Consider developing a strategy that will help you to "Remember how the Lord your God led you" (Deut. 8:2). It doesn't have to be elaborate. It might be something as simple as keeping a journal of God's answers to your prayers. In ancient Israel they sometimes piled stones into a mound to memorialize God's acts of deliverance (or judgment) in their lives. What kind of memorial might serve as your personal "pile of stones?"

Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.

1 CHRONICLES 16:11



TODAY AT MOODY

Today, we'd like to focus our prayers on just one group of our Operations employees. Painters Edgardo Bartolome, Troy Billow, and Vincent Camera make sure our campus looks clean and attractive in all seasons. We are grateful for their work.

*If we confess
our sins, he is
faithful and
just and will
forgive us our
sins and
purify us from
all unrighteousness.*

1 JOHN 1:9



TODAY AT MOODY

Heidy Hartley, Vice President of Public Relations and Corporate Services, asks for your prayers on behalf of her department as they reach out to the public at large through press releases, community volunteer service, publications, and other projects.

Read: Deuteronomy 9:1–10:11

TODAY IN THE WORD



John Steinbeck once observed that failure is often a catalyst for spiritual growth. “If everything is coming your way,” he wrote, “you are probably in the wrong lane. Adversity and defeat are more conducive to spiritual growth than prosperity and victory.” But what if the defeat we experience involves more than a setback in our circumstances? What if we have experienced defeat because of our own sin?

As Israel prepared to take possession of the land God had promised them, it was vital that they keep in mind their defeats as well as their victories. The Lord commanded, “Remember this and never forget how you provoked the Lord your God to anger in the desert. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord” (Deut. 9:7). A healthy awareness of their past failures was intended to be a remedy against spiritual presumption. More importantly, it would bring to mind how God had been faithful to discipline and forgive them.

The Bible is filled with stories of people whose mistakes and failures were redeemed by God. Some—like Jacob the deceiver, Judah the father of an illegitimate child, David the adulterer, and Rahab the prostitute—even appear in the lineage of Jesus (Matt. 1:2–5). Peter denied Jesus three times, and Thomas questioned whether Jesus had truly risen from the

dead. Paul persecuted the church. All of these were used by God despite their past failings.

At the same time, we should not conclude from this that God’s redeeming love will always shield us from or even reverse all the consequences of our sins. Because they refused to obey God, Israel experienced hardship for forty years and an entire generation perished in the wilderness. Jacob spent many years alienated from his family, and the actions of both Judah and David were the cause of considerable personal pain for others. Yet God can redeem even this. In Romans 6:21 the apostle Paul points to the consequences of sin as a motivation to obey God in the future: “What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!”

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Why not take Paul’s advice and do some “spiritual calculating?” Think of three or four instances where you acted contrary to God’s commands. What were some of the consequences you suffered as a result? How did your sin affect those around you? Think also about the lessons God taught you as a result of these experiences. Conclude by reading 1 John 1:9. If you have never claimed God’s promise of forgiveness through Christ, do so today. Thank Him for His promise to cleanse you from “all unrighteousness.”

Read: Deuteronomy 10:12–11:52

TODAY IN THE WORD



Everyone likes good food, but many of us don't equate that with food that is "good for you." When parents set limitations on how much ice cream their children eat, they may try to help them understand by saying: "It's for your own good." But that rarely makes the child feel good about broccoli! We might feel skeptical, then, when we read that God used this reasoning to explain why He gave decrees and commands to Israel. We may have a nagging suspicion that, although these laws may be good for us, we definitely won't enjoy them.

Perhaps that is why the Lord went on to remind Israel of His motives for giving His law. It wasn't because He wanted to make their lives miserable. He was motivated by love and by a desire to bless His people. These commands would help Israel to know Him better and would give them an opportunity to return His love. They would also provide a safeguard against the moral and spiritual dangers that were inherent in the culture of their day.

According to Josh McDowell, all the moral precepts found in Scripture have this dual aim—to provide us with a better understanding of who God is and to protect us from the consequences of sin. In his book *Right From Wrong* he explains, "The commandments and precepts of Scripture are designed not only to say, 'Do

this,' and 'Don't do that,' but to lead us beyond the precept to a universal principle (one that applies to everyone) and, ultimately, to the God who expresses Himself through precept."

Similarly, the decrees given to Israel were designed to lead them beyond the specific commands so they could see the principles upon which they were founded. God explained that obedience would prepare His people to go in and take the land He had promised to give them. Making these commands part of the fabric of their daily lives would also help to ensure that biblical values could be passed on to the next generation. He emphasized that love was at the heart of all God's decrees. They can be distilled down to these two principles: love the Lord and hold fast to all His ways (Deut. 11:22).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Our obedience to God's commands should be motivated by our knowledge that they are "for our own good" and should be energized by our personal experience of God's redemptive love. Is there a command in Scripture that you find especially difficult to accept today? Prayerfully examine it to learn what it reveals about God's love for you. It may be designed to pave the way for future blessing, or it could be intended to protect you from harm. Ask the Holy Spirit for His power as you seek to obey.

I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:35



TODAY AT MOODY

Today we invite you to uphold in prayer MBI President, Dr. Joseph Stowell, as he speaks at the Youth Pastors' Conference in California. We pray that Dr. Stowell's message will speak to the life of every participant.

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

ROMANS 10:4



TODAY AT MOODY

As you pray, please mention our Computer Support staff: Mark Iverson, Steven Takushi, Hector Vazquez, and Julio Vidal. We are glad we can always rely on their expertise to receive timely help with all computer problems.

Read: Deuteronomy 12:1-32

TODAY IN THE WORD



Differences over worship style are the basis for many church conflicts

today. In most instances people disagree over music. Although these conflicts are never desirable, they can have the benefit of forcing us to ask some fundamental questions about worship. What is God looking for? Does He accept all forms of worship? Or does He want us to worship Him in a specific way?

As far as worship under the Law of Moses was concerned, God was indeed looking for a particular “style” of worship. The Law of Moses described how Israel was to worship in great detail, specifying when, where, and how God’s people were to approach Him. It even regulated the kind of clothing that priests were to wear when they approached the altar! The Lord also warned His people not to adopt the religious practices of the nations they were about to displace as they took possession of the land of promise. In fact, they were commanded to take extreme measures to ensure that the idolatrous worship of those people didn’t spread.

These commands raise an inevitable question. Is God as specific when it comes to the church’s worship? The answer is “yes”—but with a significant difference. The commands given to Israel dealt primarily with methods and rituals. The

church, on the other hand, is to approach God in worship through the person of Jesus Christ. All that the Old Testament law specified merely anticipated what Christ would accomplish by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. As important as the Law was, it could not do for the worshiper what Jesus Christ would eventually do: “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship” (Heb. 10:1).

This is the reason the apostle Paul describes Jesus as the “end of the law” in Romans 10:4. He is the goal to which the law was meant to lead, and His work provided the forgiveness that the law revealed was needed.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Is it possible that our many conflicts about worship style have caused us to lose sight of the real focus of our worship? Jesus told the woman of Samaria that God is seeking a certain kind of worshiper.

Instead of identifying this worshiper with a particular ritual or a certain style of music, Jesus said that it would be a person who recognized that He is God’s promised Messiah and one who worshiped God in Spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:23–26).

Read: Deuteronomy 13:1–18

TODAY IN THE WORD



Coins in the United States have the phrase “In God We Trust” stamped upon them. But to which God does this refer? It is true that many who framed the Constitution shared common values shaped by their Judeo-Christian heritage, but the American religious scene is now far more pluralistic than it was when the United States was founded. While many still acknowledge Jesus Christ as God’s Son and believe that the Bible is the Word of God, Christians must compete in the marketplace of ideas along with Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and countless other religious views. The United States is one of the most religiously diverse countries on earth.

This tradition of religious pluralism offers at least one advantage. It has allowed the church to worship and proclaim the gospel in freedom. But it also poses a danger. Because we live in a culture that celebrates religious diversity, we face the temptation of becoming religious pluralists ourselves. With so many views existing side by side, how do we protect ourselves from embracing false views of God?

The children of Israel were confronted with a similar problem. Moses warned that once they settled in the land God had promised to give them, their faith would be constantly challenged by the pagan beliefs of the surrounding nations. False

prophets would come claiming to have special insights directly from God and demonstrating the ability to perform miraculous signs. Friends and relatives could be deceived by their teaching and might tempt others to adopt the same views. Entire towns might be drawn into false worship.

The penalties for spiritual defection in the Law of Moses were severe. Although the punishments stipulated by the Law—the death penalty for those who worshiped gods other than the God of the Bible—do not apply to today’s society, they serve as a blunt reminder to the church not to take spiritual error lightly. God’s people still have an obligation to guard the truth that has been entrusted to them (2 Tim. 1:13–14).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In order to “guard the good deposit” of truth that has been entrusted to us, we must first know the truth.

Obtain a copy of your church’s doctrinal statement from your pastor or a church leader and study it. What does it tell you about the truths your church believes are essential to the Christian faith? What does it say about Jesus Christ and His work? The Moody Publishers catalog has many books about Christian doctrine, such as *Basic Theology* by Charles Ryrie and *Foundational Faith* edited by John Koessler.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

ACTS 4:12



TODAY AT MOODY

You can encourage with your prayers our Vice President of Publications, Greg Thornton, and his colleagues at Moody Publishers. We thank God for their dedication and hard work to provide our readers with quality Christian books.

*So whether
you eat or
drink or
whatever you
do, do it all
for the glory
of God.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31



TODAY AT MOODY

With the start of Spring break today, we want to remember in prayer our faculty from the Sports Ministry department—Kirk Baker, Daniel Dunn, Joseph Harding, Jean Penfound, and Candida VanBuskirk—and wish them a restful time away from classes.

Read: Deuteronomy 14:1–29

TODAY IN THE WORD



The story has been told about a little boy who refused to eat prunes when they were served to him. The boy's mother sent him to his room with a shake of her finger and the admonition, "God is angry at you!" A thunderstorm broke out while the boy was serving his punishment. As the storm raged, the mother began to feel a little remorse for being so stern with her son. Thinking that the crashing thunder and flashing lightning might have frightened him, she decided to open the door and peek into his room. When she did, the mother saw the boy standing at the window. As he contemplated the fury of the storm he muttered to himself, "What a big deal to make over a few prunes!"

We may be tempted to draw a similar conclusion after reading today's passage. The dietary laws described in the Law of Moses seem strange, if not a little petty, to us. Why should God care if His people ate animals with a split hoof or not? Was it really so important to their spiritual life that the seafood they ate had fins and scales on it?

These laws served three important purposes. First, many of them had a basis in health concerns. The prohibition against eating pork, for example, was wise in a culture where eating poorly cooked pork could be deadly. Second, many of these dietary laws made the difference between holy and

unholy living more vivid to God's people by declaring as unclean many animals to which Hebrew culture had a natural aversion.

Primarily, however, the laws served as a daily reminder that God's call to holiness extended to the smallest aspect of the believer's life. They prove that, as far as God is concerned, there are no insignificant areas of life. Although the dietary limitations of the law of Moses are not binding on the Christian, those who know Christ are just as obligated to take God's call to holiness seriously in every aspect of daily life. Whether it is a question of what we put into our bodies or how we use them, we are to see all aspects of our life as a stewardship from God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Read 1 Corinthians 10:23–33. Like the Corinthians, our questions about what constitutes godly living sometimes concern matters not explicitly addressed in Scripture. In such cases the path of holiness is more difficult than simply examining the shape of an animal's hoof. The Corinthian believers were not bound by the dietary regulations of the Law of Moses, yet food became a "spiritual" issue in their congregational life. Can you think of similar matters that affect the life of your congregation? What does it mean for you to live as a child of God in such circumstances?

Read: Deuteronomy 15:1–25

TODAY IN THE WORD



It must have seemed like a dream come true when the members of St. Mary's

United Methodist Church learned that one of the residents in their community had remembered the church in his will. The amount was staggering—\$60 million. The will made no stipulations as to how the money was to be used, so the congregation formulated an advisory board to help them decide. Once word got out, the church's phone began to ring off the wall with calls requesting financial aid. What seemed like an unmixed blessing now proved to be a challenge as the church struggled to maintain a proper focus despite its newfound wealth.

George MacDonald once observed that the rich are not the only ones in danger of being dominated by things. "They too are slaves who, having no money, are unhappy from the lack of it," he observed. Interestingly, money and slavery are both the focus of today's passage. Both were linked in the culture of ancient Israel. Deuteronomy 15 describes how every seven years Israel was to cancel all debts and free those who sold themselves into slavery to escape poverty. During this Sabbath year the people were also required to let the ground lie fallow. The land certainly benefited from this practice, but it was primarily God's way of

providing for the poor (Ex. 23:10–11).

God's people also benefited from obeying the commands related to the Sabbath year. Canceling all debts and allowing the ground to lie fallow every seven years provided a regular reminder that God alone is the source of our prosperity. We are required to work, but ultimately it is God who supplies what we need: "He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever" (Ps. 111:5). He is the one "who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food" (2 Cor. 9:10). Those who believe in Christ may not be obliged to observe the Sabbatical year, but we are commanded not to put our hope in wealth (which is uncertain) but to be generous and make provisions for meeting the needs of others.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Do you have a plan for providing for the needs of the poor?

If you lack the financial resources to do this, why not consider offering some of your time and effort instead? Ask your pastor whether there is a food pantry located in your community. It may need volunteers to help distribute food to the needy. If you live near an urban area, there is probably a rescue mission or homeless shelter that would be happy to have you help serve a meal to its residents.

As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

GALATIANS 6:10



TODAY AT MOODY

Please commit to prayer today the Educational Resources staff under the leadership of Dr. Michael Kane. They bring modern technology to the classrooms, and all our students appreciate their contribution to the efficiency of the learning process.

The gift is acceptable according to what one has.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:12



TODAY AT MOODY

Moody Graduate School students start their modular classes today. During this busy time, please lift up in prayer its Dean and Vice President, Dr. Joseph Henriques, and ask the Lord for the steady course and vision for the development of MGS under his leadership.

Read: Deuteronomy 16:1-17

TODAY IN THE WORD



A few years ago *USA Today* revealed that more than 40 percent of Americans

felt that it was okay to cheat on their taxes. These statistics probably haven't changed much since then. Some feel this way because they believe that the government wants too much of their money. Others don't agree with the way their money is spent. Many feel that the load is unevenly distributed. We certainly don't agree with the ethics of those who cheat on their taxes, but according to biblical principles we can sympathize with the desire for an equitable tax burden.

An evenly distributed burden is also the ideal behind the guidelines for giving outlined in the Old and New Testaments. Under the Law of Moses, God's people were required to present themselves to the Lord three times a year. Each time they were not to come before the Lord "empty-handed" but were to bring a gift in proportion to the way God had blessed them (Deut. 16:16-17).

This principle was reflected in all of the offerings required of Israel. The type of offering to be brought was dependent upon the worshiper's income. Where a wealthier person may have been required to bring a sheep or a goat, the poor were told to bring only two doves (Lev. 5:7). If a worshiper could not afford doves, they were permitted to offer grain

instead (Lev. 5:11). It was not God's intent that offerings brought to Him would be a burdensome tax on His people's spiritual life.

In the New Testament, these principles of equity and giving according to one's prosperity are both cited to help believers in the church understand their obligations in this area. As was the case with the Law, giving in the age of grace is to be in proportion to God's blessing. God does not intend to overburden one group and let others benefit at their expense; rather, the goal for the church's giving is that the load be shared equally. It's important to note, however, that an equal load did not mean that every believer gave an equal amount of money (2 Cor. 8:12-15).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It can be tempting to think primarily in terms of the amount when we give to

God. How much does He want? Should we give Him ten percent? Should we base it on our gross income or our net? Should we give less than a tithe? The biblical pattern, however, is to begin with the spirit rather than the amount. Our giving is pleasing to God "if the willingness is there" (2 Cor. 8:12). Like the believers in Macedonia in Paul's day, we need to give ourselves to the Lord first and then set the figure (2 Cor. 8:5).

Read: Deuteronomy 16:18–17:20

TODAY IN THE WORD



In his book entitled *Jesus the Pastor*, John Frye observes that today's church is often tempted to look to models other than Jesus to guide its leaders. "I am not saying that Jesus has been totally neglected, rather, he has been relegated to other dimensions of Christian and local church experience," he explains. "Jesus is shoved into our shadows as we read our management books, do our cultural surveys, attend our leadership seminars, and applaud or criticize one another's endeavors."

In many ways the problem that Frye identifies is not a new one. Israel's new-found freedom brought the challenge of establishing corporate leadership structures that reflected God's value system. Immediately, they faced the challenge of selecting judges capable of handling the inevitable problems that come when people live in community and are responsible for governing themselves. There were also religious questions and disputes that had to be settled by the priests and Levites. What's more, God's people would face an even graver leadership challenge in the future.

Moses warned that Israel would not always be satisfied with the leadership structure God had established for them. Like today's church, the time would come when they would be tempted to turn to secular examples. Moses warned that in that day they would want to

choose a king who was "like all the nations" around them (Deut. 17:14). In view of these temptations, it was critical that God's Word should be their ultimate point of reference. Israel's leaders may have looked like those of the surrounding nations in certain respects, but they were not to be like them.

So what does biblical leadership look like? It is a leadership style that is not driven by pride or self-interest. It leads by serving rather than through intimidation. Its values are drawn from Scripture, and its goal is to make sure that God's people do not turn "to the right or to the left" when responding to the truth of God's Word. It is biblically centered and Spirit empowered. Simply put, biblical leadership is a matter of leading like Jesus.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Think of the most effective leader you know. What parallels do you see between that person's leadership style and the leadership of Christ? Why not take a moment to write a quick note to them today sharing your observations and thanking them for their effort? Don't forget that the church is not the only context where Christ-like leadership is needed. Jesus should be our leadership model whether the context is the church, the home, or the workplace. Where do you need to lead like Jesus today?

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved . . . who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15



TODAY AT MOODY

Richard Campbell, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, would like to express appreciation for all our partners in ministry who committed their prayers and finances to the Lord's work at MBI. Please continue to uphold Moody's finances in prayer.

*The elders
who direct the
affairs of the
church well
are worthy of
double honor.*

1 TIMOTHY 5:17



TODAY AT MOODY

While praying for the MBI finances and God's provision for the Institute, please mention in your prayers the staff of Treasury Operations: Jane Coffey, Yolanda Garcia, and Stephen Kott. May the Lord guide every step of their personal and professional life!

Read: Deuteronomy 18:1-14

TODAY IN THE WORD



Jerry was unhappy when he learned that his church had called a new pastor. "There's only one reason he decided to leave his old church and come to ours," he complained. "He came here because we offered him more money!" Many people agree with Jerry that salary should not be a factor in a pastor's decision to serve a particular church. Interestingly, they would feel differently about a Christian whose vocation was in a "secular" field, like engineering or retail sales.

The Bible warns the church's leaders of the danger of serving for material gain. Paul emphasized that an important qualification of one appointed to the office of elder in the New Testament church was that he not be a "lover of money" (1 Tim. 3:3). Yet the Scriptures also teach that God's people have an obligation to provide for those whose full-time calling is to minister to them. Those who served the tabernacle under the Law of Moses—the priests and the Levites—were not given an allotment of land like the other tribes. They were permitted to live in towns and to own individual plots of land, but their primary source of support came through the offerings brought by God's people. They lived off a portion of the tithes and sacrifices brought there.

Although the methods have changed, this same principle has been carried over to the

church. Paul appealed to this Old Testament practice when he spoke of an apostle's "right of support" (1 Cor. 9:12-13). Jesus affirmed this when He declared that "the worker is worth his keep" (Matt. 10:10; cf. 1 Cor. 9:14). Although Paul did not choose to utilize this right while ministering among the Corinthians, he did accept financial help from other churches (2 Cor. 11:8).

In Christ every believer serves as a priest. However, what was true of the priests and the Levites of the Old Testament is also true of us—the Lord is our inheritance. The danger of loving money more than God is not confined to the church's leaders. On the contrary, it is often the congregation's love of money that prompts the church to begrudge its pastors the financial support that is their due.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Most churches make their pastor's salary a matter of public record by publishing it in their annual report. Does your pastor's compensation indicate that your church feels that he is "worth his keep?"

A church with limited financial resources can think of creative ways to fulfill this obligation. Offering to watch the pastor's children or providing home or auto repairs at no cost are practical ways of providing support. The wise church knows that a good pastor is worthy of "double honor" (1 Tim. 5:17).

Read: Deuteronomy 18:15–21

TODAY IN THE WORD



Each morning millions of people turn to the horoscope section of the newspaper for guidance for the day. They believe that the movement of the stars can predict their future. Some turn to sources like the obscure poetry of the sixteenth-century physician Nostradamus, who claimed to see far into the future.

God's people had no newspapers, but they did face the challenge of testing the validity of those who claimed to speak for God. The Lord promised that He would send prophets to Israel who would speak the words of God to them. Although these prophets often made predictions about the future, their primary mission was to call God's people to obedience. Predictions of the future were one of the means God used to authenticate their ministry of speaking His word. Scriptures condemn the practice of seeking guidance through horoscopes (Isa. 47:13–14). Astrology does not have the power to predict the future and those who turn to it for help are involved in "error" (Isa. 47:15).

Likewise, Scriptures condemn the art of divination—the practice of predicting the future by observing natural and supernatural phenomena (Lev. 19:26). In biblical times several forms of divination were common. Some people tried to see the future by examining the entrails of certain animals, interpreting dreams, or attempting to contact the dead.

These practices posed a problem for God's people. How were they to discern between God's true spokesmen and those who were impostors? The Scriptures prescribed two tests. The first was the test of accuracy. The predictions of a true prophet of God had to come true. Any prophet who made a prediction that failed to come to pass was to be regarded as a false prophet and executed.

However, some of the predictions made by God's prophets took decades and even generations before coming to pass. In fact, we are still waiting for some to be fulfilled today. Therefore, a second important test was needed. Any prophet whose teaching contradicted the revealed truth of God's Word was to be ignored, despite any predictions he might make or miracles he might perform (Deut. 13:1–3).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The same God who spoke through the prophets in the past continues to speak to us today in His Word. According to the author of the book of Hebrews, God's ultimate revelation of Himself has come through His Son Jesus Christ. We do not need to turn to occult practices like astrology for direction.

How would you use today's passage and the others included in this study to help someone you know who believes that astrology is a valid means of obtaining guidance for life?

In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.

HEBREWS 1:2



TODAY AT MOODY

Today, please add to your prayer list these additional members of the Treasury Operations staff: Elisa Mendez, Holly Motta, and Annita Smith. Thank the Lord for their faithful service.

*Do no wrong
or violence to
the alien, the
fatherless or
the widow,
and do not
shed innocent
blood in
this place.*

JEREMIAH 22:3



TODAY AT MOODY

Please pray that Dr. Charles Dyer, Senior Vice President of Education, will be strengthened and encouraged in the Lord today, as he serves Him investing his skills and knowledge in God's kingdom.

Read: Deuteronomy 19:1–21

TODAY IN THE WORD



The Jewish philosopher Philo once wrote, “Holiness toward God and justice toward men usually go together.” We see this reflected in the Law of Moses. God’s Law was not merely concerned about law and order—its aim was to move Israelite society in the direction of justice. One proof of this is seen in the rules laid down for the establishment of cities of refuge.

Once God’s people had settled in the land, they were to establish cities in a central location and build roads to them so that people would have easy access. Anyone guilty of unintentionally killing another person and who took refuge there was guaranteed protection from the “avenger of blood” until the elders of the city judged his case.

The “avenger of blood” was the one charged with responsibility for executing the death penalty on those guilty of murder. The text doesn’t say how this person was appointed. It is likely that he was a family member of the victim who was given the responsibility of seeing that justice was done.

If the accused was found guilty by the elders of the city, he was given to the avenger of blood. If found innocent, he remained there, serving a virtual life sentence until the death of the High Priest. This law balanced the community’s responsibility to avenge innocent blood with its obligation to protect the rights of the accused.

In addition, the Law of God required the validity of all accusations to be corroborated by the testimony of two or more witnesses. Anyone who gave false testimony was liable to the same punishment that would have been executed on the one who had been accused.

This principle is echoed in the New Testament directives dealing with the exercise of church discipline. Those who have been sinned against by another believer are first to go privately and appeal to the offender. If rejected, they are to take two or more witnesses and appeal again. Finally, if rejected again, church discipline should be carried out (Matt. 18:15–17). Any accusation made against a church leader must first be established by two or more witnesses before the church takes action upon it.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



God’s holiness is reflected in His passion for justice. His justice is tempered with mercy. Both come together in the work of Jesus Christ. God did not lower the demands of the Law in Christ. Instead, He met them by sending His Son to suffer the death penalty that our sins deserve. As a result, Jesus has become a source of mercy for all those who trust in Him.

Have you fled to Christ as your “city of refuge?” Only He is able to shield you from the final judgment that the “avenger of blood” in Moses’ day foreshadowed.

Read: Deuteronomy 20:1–20

TODAY IN THE WORD



During the turbulent days of his government, Oliver

Cromwell sent one of his envoys to Sweden to represent his interests. The official stopped at an inn while in route, accompanied by his servant, but the envoy found that he was so troubled by the affairs of state that he could not sleep. He tossed and turned until his servant finally spoke up. “Sir,” the servant asked, “Do you not think that God governed the world well before you came into it?” “Undoubtedly,” the envoy replied. “And sir,” the servant continued, “do you not think that He will govern it quite as well when you are gone out of it?” “Certainly!” snorted the envoy—a little irritated at being asked the obvious. “Then sir, excuse me, but do you not think you may trust Him to govern it quite as well as long as you live?” The envoy promptly turned over and went to sleep.

For Israel, the secret to success in taking possession of the land that God had promised to them didn’t lie in human strategy or military might. Ultimately it was a matter of faith. The directives laid down for God’s people in today’s passage echo the message of the gospel song that declares, “faith is the victory that overcomes the world.”

If this was true for God’s people in a time of literal warfare, it is even more important in the spiritual warfare all believers encounter today. God’s peo-

ple continue to face a formidable opponent: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). These same spiritual powers were created by Christ and for Christ (Col. 1:16).

Because He has already triumphed over them, these principalities and powers cannot separate us from the love of God (Col. 2:15; Rom. 8:38). They may be our enemies, but they are an enemy that has already been defeated. Our confidence is the same offered to the armies of Israel. God is working on our behalf in the midst of all we face—He works for our good and His glory.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Do the obstacles you face seem overwhelming today?

God is more than equal to the challenge. His message to Israel as they were about to confront their enemies was essentially this: “I am in charge and I am able to accomplish my purposes through you.” Make a list of the “enemies” that are arrayed against you today. As you pray, commit each one to the Lord. When you have finished sing the chorus, “He is Able, More than Able” and thank Him for accomplishing His will in all that concerns you today.

And without faith it is impossible to please God.

HEBREWS 11:6



TODAY AT MOODY

We’d like to spend time in prayer for our Distance Learning Center that brings Moody education to ministry-minded people around the world fitting their schedules and workload. We start with our Chicago staff: Sarah Peeler and Carla Segally.

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

PHILIPPIANS 2:4



TODAY AT MOODY

Today join us in prayer for our Moody Northwest Extension Studies site where its staff—Tina Armagost, Jack Lewis, Grant Opland, and Rebekah Wilson—provides a biblically-based, low-cost alternative to the traditional college program to those who want to serve Christ.

Read: Deuteronomy 21:1–17

TODAY IN THE WORD



Hubert Humphrey once observed: “The moral test of a government is how it treats those who are at the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadow of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped.”

Today’s passage conveys a similar thought. It reveals that God expects His people to treat human life with respect. This expectation is reflected in laws that called for the community as a whole to take responsibility for the shedding of innocent blood. The Law also regulated cultural practices affecting some of society’s most vulnerable members: captives, wives, and children.

What may surprise us most about these laws is their failure to speak against practices that most of us would condemn today. They regulate practices like polygamy and the taking of women as “spoils” in warfare. This doesn’t mean that God endorses such things. The purpose of these laws was to introduce a redemptive dynamic into cultural practices that already existed. When compared to the customs of the surrounding nations in Moses’ day, they are clearly more humane. Rape, for example, was a common feature of ancient warfare. The Law of Moses did not allow this. Instead of permitting a woman who had been taken captive to be treated as an object and then cast aside, she was to be treated with dignity and given an oppor-

tunity to mourn the loss of her family. Likewise, in an age when the husband possessed the right to divorce his wife or disown his children for virtually no cause, the Law of Moses required God’s people to protect the inheritance rights of the first-born. This, in turn, protected the financial interests of the mother, who was both socially and economically vulnerable.

The purpose of the Law of Moses was not to create an ideal society. Its function was to restrain sin and reveal the need for God’s grace. Jesus indicated that some of the statutes in the Law were intended to regulate already existing practices that did not themselves have God’s approval (Matt. 19:3–9).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



While it is likely that the specific commands contained in today’s passage do not reflect the kinds of situations you are going to face today, the underlying principle does. You can expect to come into contact with those who are socially or economically vulnerable and those whose interests need to be protected. It may be the homeless, the elderly, the unborn, or simply those who are lonely and overlooked in your church. What can you do today to show them that God is concerned about them and is looking out for their interests?

Read: Deuteronomy 21:18–22:50

TODAY IN THE WORD



A little boy who had been given the part of a sheep in his school's nativity play

was asking others in the program about their roles. Coming to a little girl whose mother was helping her into her costume he asked, "I'm a sheep—what are you?" "I'm Mary," she replied. With an air of solemnity, the boy declared: "It's hard being a sheep, you know." "Yes," the little girl agreed. "But it's also hard being a virgin."

She could have been speaking for many of us. Whether our commitment is to abstinence as a single person or fidelity to our spouse as one who is married, it isn't always easy being morally pure in today's society. Impure practices are widely tolerated. They are a common feature in movies and on television. Advertising images frequently appeal to our sexual impulses to sell their products, and many implicitly endorse homosexuality. Instead of being seen as a covenant made for life, marriage is now widely regarded as a temporary social commitment that can be revoked at any time. Many people don't see any need for marriage at all.

Today's passage contains an assortment of commands whose purpose, in some cases, is not always easy to understand. The intent of the command to help a neighbor whose ox or donkey has fallen in the road is clear enough. So are the commands that protect a

woman's reputation from false accusations about her moral behavior. What, however, are we to make of the others? Why did God care if an Israelite took the mother bird along with the young from her nest? Why did He command His people not to wear clothes of wool and linen woven together or to plant two kinds of seed in a vineyard?

In general, these commands emphasize the truth that a community whose culture has been shaped by divine values will also respect the limits that God has set. Whether it involves the safety of others, the preservation of the environment, or sexual practice, God alone has the authority to set moral boundaries.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Spend some time watching prime time television (or scan the channels). Note

how many programs portray in a positive light those situations that violate biblical principles of morality and purity. As you do, consider whether your own values are shaped more by popular practice or biblical standards. Do you find the limits God has set too confining? Are there some you have deliberately ignored? If so, what steps will you need to take to bring these areas in line with God's Word? Pray about what action you should take, and ask God for His strength to follow through on this commitment.

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity.

EPHESIANS 5:3



TODAY AT MOODY

In conclusion of our prayers for the Distance Learning Center, let's uphold our Extension Studies site in Ohio, managed by Richard Fisher. Also pray for all those who benefit from the academic excellence of Moody tradition in education combined with flexibility and affordability.

*From heaven
the Lord looks
down and sees
all mankind.*

PSALM 33:13



TODAY AT MOODY

Thank you for supporting with your prayers the service of Robert Gunter, General Counsel at Moody. Our prayer is that, in his many responsibilities at the Institute, he will continually draw strength and wisdom from God.

Read: Deuteronomy 23:1-25

TODAY IN THE WORD



In his classic book entitled *Holiness*, nineteenth-century Anglican bishop and evangelical leader J. C. Ryle asks his readers to consider whether it would be possible to be happy in heaven without holiness. “Suppose for a moment that you were allowed to enter heaven without holiness,” he writes. “What would you do? What possible enjoyment could you feel there? To which of all the saints would you join yourself, and by whose side would you sit down? Their pleasures are not your pleasures, their tastes not your tastes, their character not your character.”

Today’s passage emphasizes a similar theme. Just as there is no happiness in heaven without holiness, it is equally true that those who are most at home among God’s people live holy lives. The regulations in the Mosaic Law set limits on those who were permitted to join God’s people when they were assembled for worship. In many cases, the conditions of exclusion were related to pagan worship practices. Other stipulations, however, provided direction for handling a range of daily concerns, from the charging of interest to picking grapes from a neighbor’s vineyard.

Living as we do in a culture that tends to separate the spiritual from the mundane, such matters may seem strangely unrelated. What do necessary bodily functions, the practice of

community hygiene, and the economy have in common? Most of all, what do they have to do with holiness? While they are not directly related to one another, they are all part of the same lifestyle. Holy living demands that we be careful in all our actions. Even the most private behavior comes under God’s scrutiny.

Our righteous standing before God is a gift. We are “saints” or “holy ones” by calling (Rom. 1:7). We are saved by grace and not by our own efforts (Eph. 2:8). However, even though we are made holy apart from our own effort, we will now make every effort to live holy lives. We are to “purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Read through today’s passage and identify the major areas of life that are addressed. When you are finished, identify some of the major categories in your own life. Some examples might be “Holiness in the neighborhood,” “Holiness on my job,” or “Holiness in the use of my body.” Record each category and underneath write a paragraph that describes what you think the practice of holiness should look like for that area of your life. Are there changes you need to make in the way your life is structured in order to make this a reality?

Read: Deuteronomy 24:1–22

TODAY IN THE WORD



“All the arguments which are brought to represent poverty as no evil show it to be a great evil,” Samuel Johnson noted. “You never find people laboring to convince you that you may live very happily with a plentiful fortune.”

God’s concern for the poor is a consistent theme in the Scriptures. Far from romanticizing the plight of the poor as some in the church have occasionally done, God’s Word acknowledges that the poor are often taken advantage of and need society’s protection. The Law of Moses included many regulations that protected the rights of the poor and offered them a kind of social safety net. The regulations found in Deuteronomy 24 reflect this priority, as well as a general concern for others who were vulnerable in Hebrew society: women, orphans, and foreigners. Commentator J. G. McConville explains, “The movement in the chapter, from marriage to other measures protecting family life, and thence to commands protecting the poor and disadvantaged, is part of the laws’ connected reflection on what it means to be the people of Yahweh.”

Why should we care about the weak? First, we should care because God cares about them. He has an abiding interest in those that society has overlooked. This was reflected in Christ’s ministry when He accepted as His disciples those that Jewish society despised.

Second, we should care about the weak because we were once weak (1 Cor. 1:26). It is true that such a concern contributes to a more humane society, but that is not primarily why we as Christians show an interest. Our concern is an expression of the gratitude we feel for God’s grace shown to us. It is an expression of our longing to have a heart that reflects God’s own heart.

Fortunately, few evangelicals today see such a concern as an expression of a purely “social” gospel. We recognize that the same God who sent His Son to die for our sins is also the one who “secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy” (Ps. 140:12). Seeing the church’s obligation to the poor is not a new concept; it is part of the church’s spiritual DNA (cf. Acts 9:36; Gal. 2:10).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It is easy to be so overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problems caused by poverty that we fail to do anything about it. Individually, we may not be able to change the social structures and injustices that cause poverty. In fact, it is unlikely that we will. Jesus said that we would always have the poor among us (John 12:8). This does not mean, however, that what you do is insignificant—it’s important to the people who are touched by your actions and to God. Ask your pastor for suggestions about practical ways you can “remember the poor.”

He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord.

PROVERBS 19:17



TODAY AT MOODY

Throughout the history of MBI, a visionary group of men have lent their experience and knowledge to advance the ministries of Moody. We are talking about our Trustees. Please refer to page five of this issue for the current Trustees’ names, and pray for them.

*Do not
pervert
justice.*

LEVITICUS 19:15



TODAY AT MOODY

Moody Bible Institute is blessed with a leadership group that is striving to lead like Christ.

Edward Cannon, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, contributes daily to the

Christlike leadership model. Would you pray for him today?

Read: Deuteronomy 25:1–19

TODAY IN THE WORD



In June 2000, Genevieve Simonon murdered her lover by bashing in his skull. She called a close friend who was a doctor and told him that her lover had suffered a heart attack and had hit his head while falling. The doctor wrote out a death certificate without examining the body and cited “natural causes” as the cause of death. However, the mortician became suspicious and called the police, and Simonon confessed to the crime. Two years later, after hearing testimony about her difficult past, a jury sentenced Simonon to psychiatric evaluation and five years of probation.

Some would say that Simonon’s case exemplifies a key component of the American judicial system in our day—clear protections of the rights of the accused. In God’s legal system, even the rights of the guilty were protected. They were punished, but limits were set to ensure that the penalty was commensurate with the crime. Care was taken, not only to see that justice was done, but to make certain that the guilty would not be degraded in the process (Deut. 25:3).

This concern is a striking example of the importance of preserving the human dignity of others—even those who seem to be the least deserving of such protection. Likewise, the rights of animals were to be protected, as well as the inheritance rights of widows.

Mosaic justice, however, was not soft. A woman who unfairly helped her husband gain advantage in a fight was punished severely, and the sins of the Amalekites during the Exodus were remembered long after they took place. Overall, though, divine justice was tempered by God’s mercy, while His economy had more than the “bottom line” in view. In His eyes a just society is one that protects the rights of all, even those who deserve to be punished. It has a special concern for those who are easily taken advantage of by others who possess more power or position.

The biblical concept of justice has implications for society at large and for the individual. It includes both personal behavior and the decisions rendered by society’s leaders.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In simplest terms, justice involves doing the “right” thing. It is concerned about protecting the interests of others. Use a concordance or the search function on your Bible study software to see how often the term justice appears in the Bible. You will discover that God has more than a passing interest in it. You can emulate that interest on a personal level by speaking up for the rights of others when you see that they have been overlooked and by offering a biblical perspective to those leaders who are responsible for making certain that justice is carried out.

Read: Deuteronomy 26:1–19

TODAY IN THE WORD



In his book *Holiness By Grace*, Bryan Chapell tells of the time he gave his

father a tie rack for his birthday. It was made from a rotten log shaped like a horse's head. "I attached a length of two-by-four board to that log head, attached a rope tail, and stuck on some sticks to act as legs. Then I half-way hammered in a dozen or so nails down the two-by-four, put a bow on it, and presented it to my father" Chapell writes.

"When he took off the wrapping, he smiled and said, 'Thank you, it's wonderful . . . what is it?'"

Chapell's father used the tie rack for many years. From a child's point of view, Chapell explains that he believed that his gift to his father was as good as it gets—a true work of art. In time, however, he came to see it differently: "I understood ultimately that my father had received and used my gift not because of its goodness but out of his goodness."

This is the same perspective we should have as we give to God. When we give to God we are not trying to supply Him with something He needs or to bribe Him for favors. Instead, we are acknowledging His faithfulness in providing for our needs and declaring our dependence upon Him. In the Law of Moses such confidence in God was expressed in a concrete way through laws that commanded God's people to offer firstfruits and tithes.

These gifts also served a

practical function. They were used to provide for the Levites, orphans, and widows. Although the New Testament doesn't command the church to observe these same Mosaic laws, it does emphasize our obligation to provide for needs of those who minister to the church, for orphans and for widows (cf. 1 Cor. 9:13–14; 1 Tim. 5:3; James 1:27). The Corinthian church took offerings regularly (1 Cor. 16:2). This money was used to help the poor who lived in Jerusalem. In a way, our giving not only recognizes God's goodness to us, it becomes an expression of God's goodness to those who benefit from it.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



When God's people brought their offerings to the chief

priest, they were to make a public declaration of God's faithfulness (Deut. 26:3, 5–10). The two statements focus on concrete examples of God's care for His people. They served as reminders to Israel of God's call, His concern for them during their suffering, and of their ultimate deliverance by His powerful hand.

If you were to write a declaration of faith to be read the next time you contributed to the offering at your church, what examples of God's faithfulness in your own life might it include?

*And my God
will meet all
your needs
according to
his glorious
riches in
Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:19



TODAY AT MOODY

For the next three days, we invite you to include in your prayers our Food Service employees who work at the Student Dining Room. We start with praying for Senja Bair, Michael Burrill, Karen Davis, Vinh Hoang, and Katherine Hoskins.

*O my
people, hear
my teaching;
listen to the
words of
my mouth.*

PSALM 78:1



TODAY AT MOODY

Continuing our prayers for the Food Service staff, we ask the Lord to encourage with His love and mercy these employees: Mattie Kemp, Steven Kile, Hoa Lam, Hanh Nguyen, and Dominic Rigo.

Read: Deuteronomy 27:1–26

TODAY IN THE WORD



Several years ago media mogul Ted Turner expressed his opinion about the Ten Commandments by saying, “If you’re only going to have ten rules, I don’t know if adultery should be one of them.” Whether he was serious or not, his comment reflects the rejection of moral absolutes. It’s not a denial that morals exist. Rather, some believe that ideas of right and wrong are so personal and subjective that they can’t apply to anyone else. For them, nothing is “written in stone.”

God’s laws for Israel, however, were written in stone, both literally and figuratively. They weren’t open for debate by God’s people. Once Israel finally entered the land of promise, they were to renew their covenant with God by listening to the Levites recite the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience as promised in the Law. God’s people were then to acknowledge their accountability to this standard by responding with an “Amen” to each promise or threat.

Many aspects of the Law of Moses, however, were instructional and temporary. For example, the Mosaic Law declared some foods clean and others unclean in order to drive home the need for God’s people to distinguish between what is holy and what is unholy. When Jesus came, He declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19). The animal sacrifices and offerings required by the Law were fulfilled by

Christ (Heb. 10:1). These sacrifices were “shadows” of Christ’s sacrifice and were never meant (or able) to remove sin. Instead, they pointed to the suffering of Jesus Christ who would offer Himself “once for all” (Heb. 7:27; 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18).

It is important to note the development and progress in God’s revelation of His moral standard from Old Testament to New Testament. This is reflected in some of the differences between Old Testament legislation and New Testament commands. Some Mosaic laws regulated practices that already existed but didn’t reflect God’s moral standard (Matt. 19:8–9). The changes from Old Testament to New Testament were designed by God to move His people toward redemption and righteousness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Ultimately, the same moral standard lies behind both Testaments.

That standard is righteousness as God defines it—and He alone has the authority to define it. Can you identify the principles that lie behind the warnings in today’s reading? For example, what would be a modern equivalent to moving a neighbor’s boundary stone? What universal moral principle informs the commands that deal with sexual practices in these verses?

Identify at least one way you can observe the principle that lies behind each warning listed in Deuteronomy 27:1–26.

Read: Deuteronomy 28:1–68

TODAY IN THE WORD



Newton's third law of motion states: "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." According to Newton's law, every action has the potential to set something in motion. This is also true in the spiritual realm—but the consequences of obedience or disobedience are not always equal to the actions that set them in motion. The blessings we receive from obedience are often greater than our small efforts to please God. Likewise, the consequences of disobedience reach beyond us to affect those around us, and even have the potential to affect generations to come.

Two striking features characterize the curses in today's reading. First, most threaten to reverse the promised blessings. The Lord warned Israel that if they broke His covenant He would treat them the same way He had treated their enemies. Although they would not cease to be His chosen people, they would forfeit many of the benefits they had enjoyed as a result of that relationship. Second, we see that the curses seem to outnumber the blessings.

Certainly, this underscored the seriousness of disobedience. But it also pointed to the ultimate purpose of the Mosaic Law—as God's instrument to show us our need for redemption from sin. Although the commands of the Law were intended to bring life, the reality of sin means that they are only able to produce

death (Rom. 7:10). When God's Law comes into contact with the sinful nature the result is toxic. Sin produces within us the very things God's Law forbids (Rom. 7:7–11). This is the reason no one can be justified by trying to obey the Law (Gal. 3:10–11).

The good news is that the actions of Christ introduced a new dynamic of grace into the equation. However, instead of creating an "equal and opposite reaction," it more than countered the detrimental effects of sin. Because of Jesus, "where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Rom. 5:20). Nevertheless, the law of consequences still holds. Each day we must still decide whether we will obey or disobey. Each choice brings its own consequences.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The blessings and curses in today's passage allowed God's people to think through the consequences of their choices before making a decision. We can do the same by meditating on the past consequences of some of the sinful choices we have made and comparing them to the blessings we have experienced as a result of obedience. If you were to divide your past experiences into "blessings" and "curses," what would your list include? Who, besides yourself, was affected by these consequences? What motivation do they offer for future obedience?

*What benefit
did you reap
at that time
from the
things you are
now ashamed
of? Those
things result
in death!*

ROMANS 6:21



TODAY AT MOODY

In conclusion of our prayer time for the Food Service department, please add to your list these employees as they daily serve our students and faculty with nutritious meals: Lois Sanders, Jonathan True, Jeffery Williams, Donald Wood, and Yong Yoo.

*Restore us, O
God; make
your face
shine upon
us, that we
may be saved.*

PSALM 80:3



TODAY AT MOODY

Perry Straw, Davis Trout, and David Woodworth from Network Development expand the frontiers of Moody Broadcasting's outreach in many areas of the U.S. and overseas. Please thank God today for their fruitful ministry in the gospel—for God's glory!

Read: Deuteronomy 30:1–20

TODAY IN THE WORD



Early one February morning while Leyla Nordby slept, her 13-month-old daughter Erika slipped quietly out the door of the home where they were staying and wandered off, clothed only in a diaper and a pink dress. Several hours later her frantic mother found her lying face down in the snow. Erika's body temperature had dropped by more than half, her veins were frozen, and a cardiac monitor failed to register any measurable pumping action by her heart. Clinically speaking, Erika was dead. Doctors had prepared a heart-lung bypass to try and warm her blood when something remarkable happened. Little Erika's heart suddenly began beating again on its own. "How that happened," the paramedic on the scene later observed, "is a mystery to everyone right now."

Moses foresaw a time when Israel would share a similar experience. He promised that after suffering the consequences of their own disobedience, Israel's fortunes would be restored. Their cold hearts would begin to beat once again for God. Turning back to God, however, would require more than a mere act of the will. It would need intervention by God Himself. He would have to give them "a mind that understands," "eyes that see," and "ears that hear" (Deut. 29:4).

This promise of reconciliation was contingent on Israel's future repentance. Before it

could come to pass, they would need to "take to heart" all the blessings and punishments they had experienced at God's hand (Deut. 30:1). Moses made it equally clear that such a repentance was itself a work of divine compassion. God alone was able to "circumcise" their hearts and create within them an ability to love Him with their hearts and souls (Deut. 30:6).

In the New Testament the apostle Paul uses this image to describe the effect of Christ's work in the life of the believer. Those who trust in Christ experience a kind of spiritual circumcision (Phil. 3:3; cf. Rom. 2:29). As a result, they then go from spiritual death to spiritual life (Eph. 2:5). The believer's heart, which was once unresponsive to God, now beats for Christ.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Read Deuteronomy 29:1–29. How did God expect Israel to respond to His

Word? What did He expect them to learn from their experiences? One of Israel's problems seems to have been their inability to process their experiences through the grid of divine truth. Consider using a spiritual journal to keep you from making the same mistake. As you record your experiences, think about what God's Word has to say about your circumstances and try to discover the spiritual lessons He has hidden in the ordinary events of your day.

Read: Deuteronomy 32:1–33:29

TODAY IN THE WORD



Ira Sankey was the song leader and hymn writer for D. L. Moody's evangelistic campaigns. On one occasion Sankey was traveling on a steamer down the Delaware River when a group of passengers asked him to sing a hymn. Sankey led the group in the hymn by William Bradbury entitled, "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us."

When he had finished, a man stepped forward with a question. "Were you ever in the army, Mr. Sankey?" he asked. "Yes, I joined in 1860," Sankey replied. Hearing this, the man asked another question: "Did you do guard duty at night in Maryland, about 1862?" "Yes, I did," Sankey answered, wondering why the man wanted to know such a thing. "Well, I was in the Confederate army," the man explained. "I saw you one night at Sharpsburg. I had you in my gun sight as you stood there in the light of the moon. Then just as I was about to pull the trigger, you began to sing. It was the same hymn you sang tonight. I couldn't shoot you."

Songs of worship have the power to shape our thinking about biblical truth. Corporate worship is a divinely ordained vehicle for instruction. It can teach us about God's faithfulness and remind us of our need for His grace. In view of this, it is fitting that Moses concluded his ministry to Israel with a song. It recounted God's dealing with His people from Israel's birth as

a nation to the present. Its recurring themes revolved around the contrast between God's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness. Moses' song also served a prophetic function by predicting Israel's future rejection of Yahweh to follow the gods of the surrounding nations.

The content of Moses' song makes it an unlikely choice to be someone's favorite hymn! Its message doesn't seem upbeat enough for worship by today's standards. Much of what Moses said was critical of Israel. It predicted their future disobedience and warned that they would suffer divine discipline as a result. These words may not have been enjoyable, but they were words that God's people desperately needed to hear.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Moses' song offers a helpful corrective in an age where the quality of worship is largely defined by how good it makes us feel. But there is more to God's blessing than feeling good. He may want to use worship to convict us of our sin. He may want use it to teach us some new truth from His Word, or remind us of an old truth we've forgotten. He may even want to use it to change our behavior. Find a hymnal and spend some time reading or singing through it. Ask God to speak to you, and resolve to listen to what He says even if it feels uncomfortable.

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

EPHESIANS 5:19



TODAY AT MOODY

Several Moody Radio stations start their Share 2004 events today. We'd like to single out for prayer Radio Esperanza, a ministry to the Spanish-speaking community, headed by the Program Director Gersón García. Pray for the success of Share 2004 for this station.

And the things you have heard . . . entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

2 TIMOTHY 2:2



TODAY AT MOODY

On this last day of the month, our prayer to God is to instill in us the desire to obey Him according to His Word. Thank you for praying and ministering the love of Christ whose Spirit brings us to true obedience.

Read: Deuteronomy 34:1-12

TODAY IN THE WORD



In his book *Leadership Is an Art*, Max DePree characterizes leadership as a stewardship. “Leadership is a concept of owing certain things to the institution,” he explains. “It is a way of thinking about institutional heirs, a way of thinking about stewardship as contrasted with ownership.” Moses understood this principle. It was a measure of Moses’ humility that he could “walk away” from leadership at the end of his ministry. He knew that God’s blessing would not end with the completion of his ministry and that God’s people were not dependent upon any single leader, no matter how great that leader might be.

This doesn’t mean that every leader is the same. Deuteronomy 34:10 says that Moses was unparalleled as a leader. Imagine how intimidated Joshua must have felt following in his footsteps! While it was true that Joshua was no Moses, it was equally true that he had one great advantage. Joshua was empowered by the same Spirit that had enabled Moses to be effective. He did not need to be Moses. Indeed, it is likely that at this stage in Israel’s development as a nation they needed a very different kind of leader. Moses had brought God’s people to the threshold of the land of promise; Joshua would bring them into the land and help them settle it. Moses had been an instrument of divine revelation; Joshua would

ensure that Israel remembered all that had been revealed.

The stewardship of leadership also means that leaders are responsible for developing other leaders. Moses understood this and trained Joshua to succeed him. If Moses’ graceful handling of leadership succession speaks of his humility, the fact that he did not try to turn Joshua into a carbon copy of himself speaks of it even more.

Israel wept when they lost Moses, but they did not despair. Joshua was uniquely gifted by God to help them fulfill Moses’ vision of their future. Without a leader like Moses there could never have been a leader like Joshua. And from a human perspective, without a leader like Joshua all that Moses had done would have been in vain.

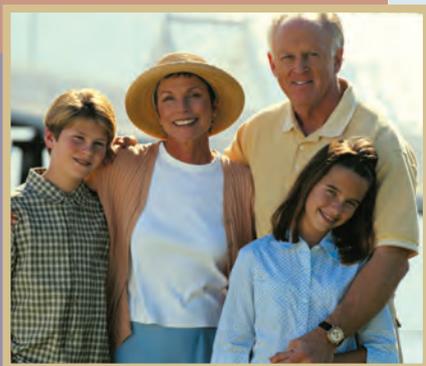
TODAY ALONG THE WAY



You may not be the leader of an organization or hold a position in the church. Yet it is likely that you have been called to exercise leadership in some area of your life. It may be as a parent, as a committee member for your church, or in your workplace.

Prayerfully consider the following questions. If leadership is a matter of stewardship, what do you owe to those you have been called to lead? What do your actions say about the values you are passing on to those you lead? Finally, who are you nurturing to step into your place?

Do You Have the Best Plan Available?



Even if you already have a will or estate plan, there may be a better plan for you.

If you are not sure of the answer, then you should attend a **MOODY TRUSTS AND ESTATE PLANNING SEMINAR**.

This presentation is loaded with practical information with plenty of time for your questions. The seminars are **FREE** and you are under no obligation if you attend.

If you want more information or would like to attend one of these seminars, please call toll free at 1.800.801.2171.

To register for a free seminar, please call 1.800.801.2171

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Moody Trusts and Estate Planning Seminars

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

WKES Area Seminars

MONDAY, MARCH 15

7:00 p.m.
Renaissance Hotel
1230 South Pine Island Rd.
Plantation, Florida 33324
954-472-2252

TUESDAY, MARCH 16

10:00 a.m.
Holiday Inn Catalina
1601 N. Congress Ave.
Boynton Beach, Florida 33426
561-737-4600

7:00 p.m.

First Baptist Church of West Palm Beach
1101 S. Flagler Dr.
West Palm Beach, Florida 33401
561-659-7400

THURSDAY, MARCH 18

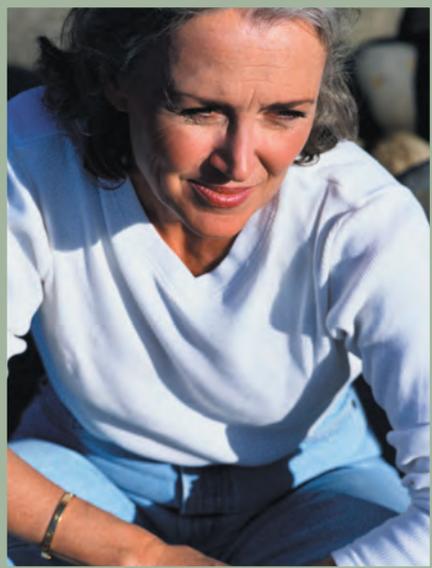
10:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
Hawthorn Suites
3557 Pine Ridge Rd.
Naples, Florida 34109
239-593-1300

FRIDAY, MARCH 19

10:00 a.m.
Radisson Inn
12635 S. Cleveland Ave.
Ft. Myers, Florida 33907
239-936-4300

You Do Have A Will!

You do have a will—whether a will you have prepared yourself or one prepared by the state where you reside at the time of your death. This “will of intestacy” is an attempt by the state to write a will for everyone; it is very inflexible and does not consider the individual needs of your family.



Obviously, you need to have your own will, but how do you get the process started? Moody Bible Institute can help you get

organized with their publication, *Will Planning Kit, Because You Care Enough*. The guide explains the will planning process with ten important steps to completing your will. The second portion of the guide includes forms that you can use to prepare for meeting with your attorney. The will planning process will go much better if you are prepared prior to that meeting.

As Christians the Bible encourages us to be good stewards of the resources that God has blessed us with, so preparing a will is an important part of that stewardship. If you want to be a good steward, you can begin by requesting a free copy of Moody's *Will Planning Kit, Because You Care Enough*, by either calling us at 1-800-801-2171 or by checking the box on the attached reader reply panel to request a copy of the *Will Planning Kit*.

