

Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. ¹⁷ **Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the LORD is giving you.** ¹⁸ **Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.** ¹⁹ **Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** ²⁰ **Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates,** ²¹ **so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.** (NIV 84)

Theme: Cherish the Word of God.

1. Put it front and center in your lives.
2. Teach it to your children.

Worship is often described as the heartbeat of a Christian. Just like a body's heart beats, a Christian worships his Savior. It's simply what Christians do. At worship services we get to give glory to, thank, and sing praises to the Lord for everything he has done for us. But how can you praise God for what he has done if you don't know what he has done? That is where Christian Education comes in—call it the brain of a Christian. The heart loves what the mind knows. We learn what he has done for us in Bible study and then we praise him for it in worship. Both worship and Bible study, then, are an essential part of a Christian's life.

We want to know what Christ has done for us and we want to know how he wants us to live our lives out of love and thanks to him. So we study his Word. We can do that by reading our Bible at home. But it also through Bible study here, where questions are asked, applications are made, and things are taught that we may not have noticed or thought of on our own.

Yet, for many of us, Bible study just isn't that big of a priority. We get too busy, too distracted by the world around us, or maybe we just don't care much about God and his Word. So today we are

encouraged to cherish God's Word, to put it front and center in your lives and to teach it to your children.

Deuteronomy means, "second law." This book was named this because it consists of Moses giving the law to the Israelites a second time. It is a book that consists mostly of lengthy sermons by Moses. Moses was about to die and Joshua would soon replace him as the leader of the Israelites. So Moses preached to his people. He reminded them of the Lord's grace in saving the people from the Egyptians and leading them to the Promised Land. But Moses also gave warnings and commands. He encouraged them to live lives according to God's commands. Verse one is a good example. **Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always.**

Our text for today takes place in the middle of Moses' second sermon. The whole sermon including our text is essentially a sermon on the first commandment—You shall have no other gods. Moses gives a warning against open idolatry in verse 16, **Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them.** But he also warned against secret idolatry—that is putting something ahead of God in our lives—thus making it more important than him and his Word. Moses warned the people because soon they would be on their own. Not only would Moses leave them, but in a sense, God would too. God had been with them and led them for the past 40 years. Soon they would enter the Promised Land, where they would be on their own, so to speak. Sure, God would be with them and lead them in war—but they wouldn't have that constant reminder of God's presence with the pillar of cloud and fire. So Moses encouraged the people in their sanctified living.

In a way, you too are on your own. Sure God is watching over you. He takes care of you. He knows everything that happens in your life. And yet, God isn't here to hold your hand. He doesn't treat you as infants. He gives you freedom to worship him and to obey his commands as your heart desires. He wants you to obey him. He wants you to worship him and study his Word. But he doesn't force you to do so. He doesn't you to mindlessly worship him or study his

word because you feel forced into it. He wants you to do so out of your own wants and desires. He wants it to flow from the heart.

And that's how it should be. The problem comes with us and our hearts. It's with our sinful nature which is so often distracted by the world. We may not commit open idolatry by worshiping false gods too often. But secret idolatry is a different story. We get caught up in the ways of the world. And things become more important than God. We get too busy to worry about God. We've got other things to do than read our Bibles at home. You'd rather do many other things than attend a Bible study.

And when we aren't studying the Bible the brain of a Christian suffers. Sure, we learn God's Word a little in worship. But that's not the primary purpose of worship—that is to praise the Lord, not to learn about him. Our knowledge of God and his Word, of his grace and compassion, of his protection and deliverance, dissipates. We remember less and less. We question more. We are more open to the attacks of unbelievers. The devil can more easily create doubt in our minds. The less we are in Bible Study the less we know about God and his Word and the weaker our faith may become. And the easier it is to fall away from the one true faith.

Moses knew all this. That's why he encouraged the Israelites to put God and his Word front and center in their lives. **Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.** This stands for us today. Put the Word of God in your hearts. That means to cherish it. To love it. To care more about his Word than anything else in the world. Put it first in your lives and in your hearts. And put it in your minds. That means to know and study it. To believe it. However, this word can also be translated as "soul" or "life." It means to make his Word your life. Let God's Word be part of your very being.

And know the Word as well as you know the back of your hand. Tie it around your hand so that you will always see it. So that you would always have it accessible. Put them around your head—around your forehead or really, between the eyes. Put his Word in front of you every day. Let your eyes see it. Put it front and center. In other words, love his Word, Cherish his Word, read his Word, and study his Word.

But Christian Education isn't just for adults—but for children as well. We want our children to love and cherish the gospel as much as we do. So we teach them God's Word. As Moses says in verse 19, **Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** You pass down a lot of things to your children—your favorite sports team, your knowledge about cars and engines, or how to knit and sew. How much more do we want to pass down our knowledge of God's Word to our children? And we do so whenever we get the chance—in our houses and on the road; before bed or after supper. Through prayers, devotions, or everyday teachable moments—we teach our children God's Word.

We have other opportunities to teach our children God's Word. That's one of the reasons we exist as a congregation. We have Sunday School, Confirmation Class, VBS, special Easter and Christmas Programs. You have many opportunities to teach your children God's Word. But do you always take advantage of them?

There are other ways to teach your children. Show them that God's Word is important to you and your family. As Moses commands, **Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.** Put God's Word where they can see it. So that when they enter the house, or leave it, God's Word is always there—on their minds. Lead by example. So that the gospel may be a priority throughout their lives.

But why do we do all of this? Why study God's Word. Why do Christians love the gospel so much? Why make it a priority? Why teach it to our children? Why take them to Sunday School and other opportunities? Not because God may punish you somehow if you don't. Not because I'm up here making you feel bad or guilt-tripping you into it. Do it because you want to. Because it's the Word of the Lord. Because his Word make you **wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**

Cherish, study, and teach your children his Word because of the blessings and benefits given to you through the Word. It is through the Word that some of you were brought to faith. It is through the gospel that the Holy Spirit strengthens your faith. Through the Word you are comforted when tragedy strikes. Through it you are encouraged when the world get's you down. In his Word you find peace and hope when

a loved one dies. You see Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. You see a Savior suffering for your sins. Dying and rising for you. You see the comfort of his and your resurrection. You are given the sure hope and confidence that eternal life is waiting for you in heaven. Through his Word your faith is strengthened, your soul is relieved, your hope restored. Through the Word you fight off the attacks of the devil and the unbelieving world. Through the faith that the Word gives and strengthens, you receive the gift of eternal life. Through the Word you learn more about God, his love for you, and his will for your life.

That is why you study his Word. That is why you care for it and cherish it. That is why you teach it to your children. There is no other reason. There is no other proper motivation. You study his Word because you want to. Because it makes us **wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus**. You teach it to your children, just as someone taught it to you, because they wouldn't know about God's grace by any other means. Grace, mercy, and salvation are found in his word—received through faith which the Word gives and strengthens. What more could you want? What other motivation do you need to study his Word? Amen.